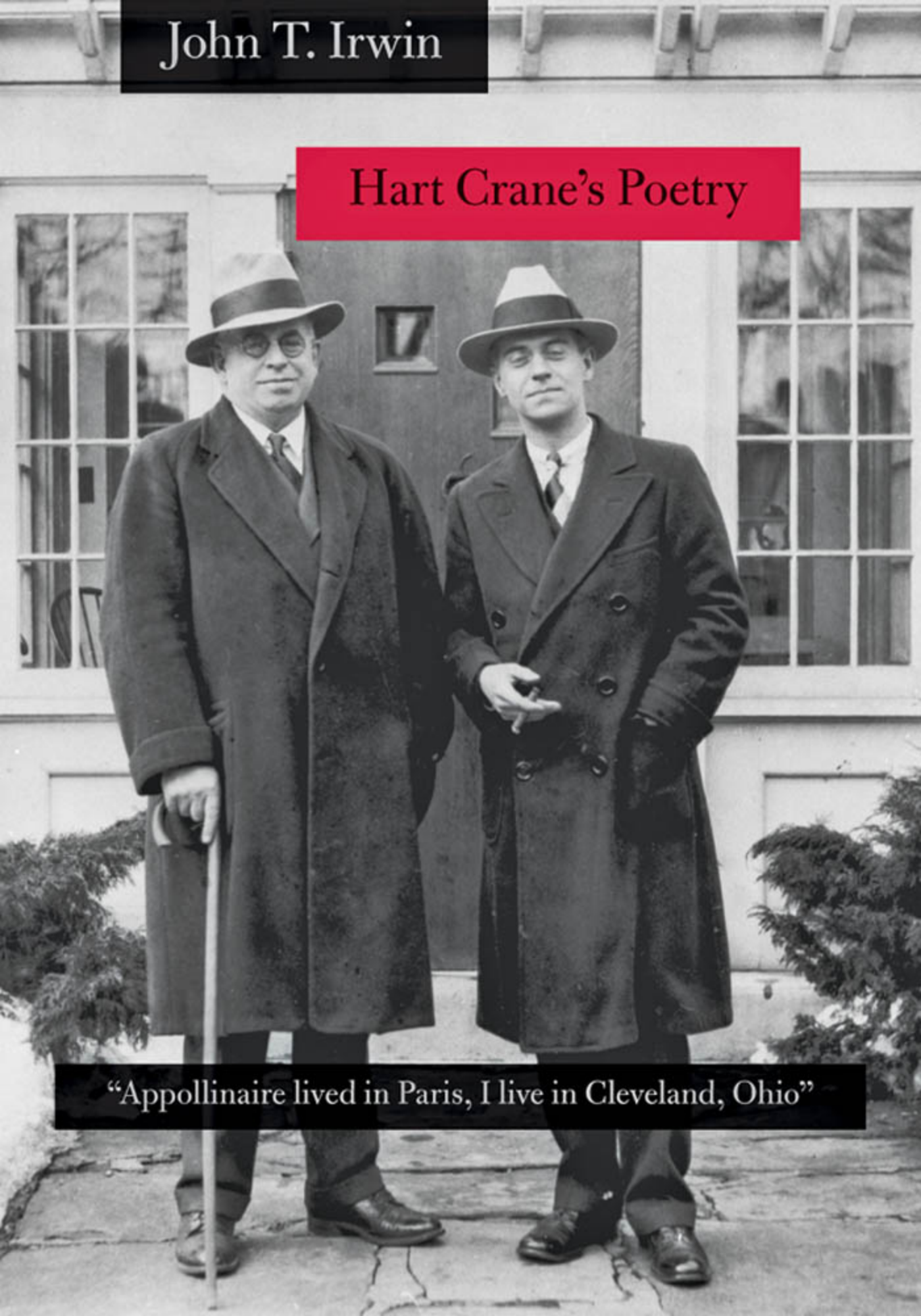
John T. Irwin

Hart Crane's Poetry



"Appollinaire lived in Paris, I live in Cleveland, Ohio"

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"Appollinaire lived in Paris, I live in Cleveland, Ohio"

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As always, for Meme, my beloved.
And for the outrageous Harold

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Preface

This is a somewhat old-fashioned kind of book. It is a reading of Hart Crane's poetry that brings to bear on the poetic text information from a variety of sources (e.g., art history, history of ideas, biography, psychoanalysis, classical literature, philosophy, mythology, and so on). What this reading of Crane's work aims to show is that *The Bridge* is the best twentieth-century long poem in English and that it is the best not by a little but by a lot. Among modern long poems it is the richest and most wide-ranging in its mythic and historical resonances, the most inventive in its combination of structures drawn from literature and the visual arts, and the most subtle and compelling in terms of its psychological underpinnings, to name only three areas in which it excels. This book also argues that the best entry to the shorter poems in Crane's first volume, *White Buildings,* and to his last poem, "The Broken Tower," is through his epic—hence, the rationale for this book's organization. Where previous studies of Crane's poetry have characteristically begun with an examination of his shorter poems and then proceeded to *The Bridge,* this study reverses the process by beginning with an examination of the long poem and then taking on the poems in *White Buildings* and "The Broken Tower." Any reader of Crane's poetry knows the difficulty involved in interpreting the poems in *White Buildings,* a difficulty created by the density of their imagery, the brevity of the context any individual poem presents, and the demands made by Crane's "logic of metaphor," a poetic practice that depends on the "so-called illogical impingement of the connotations of words" (Crane 165) on the reader's consciousness. But in *The Bridge*—with its implicit narrative thread, a subject matter ostensibly rooted in American myth and history, and an enlarged context to clarify repeated structures, images, and key words (a context that can be invoked to supplement the restricted contexts of his shorter poems)—the reader has the best road map for navigating the rest of Crane's poetry. That is why this study deals first with Crane's epic.

Crane's two sometime friends, Allen Tate and Yvor Winters, largely set the tone of the initial critical response to *The Bridge*—a response that saw the poem as a magnificent failure. And later critics often believed this judgment's accuracy was in some sense confirmed by Crane's suicide two years after the poem's publication. Tate and Winters, both college educated, would go on to distinguished academic careers as poet-critics, while Crane, with only a high school diploma, would educate himself through reading and through conversations with friends (mostly writers and visual artists). But Crane was a major poet, and Tate and Winters were minor po-

ets, and their initial reaction to *The Bridge*—while ostensibly arguing that Crane's poem was too Romantic and Whitmanian, too extravagant (and thus foredoomed) in its optimism, not modern and Eliotic enough—may also have represented a degree of professional *ressentiment* (to use Nietzsche's word). Both Tate and Winters also remembered personal quarrels with Crane, often caused by Hart's boisterous or erratic behavior when drinking: such memories may have made the two academic poet-critics feel that the high-school-educated, "roaring boy" of modern American poetry could not possibly have written an epic. Their reaction may have been further complicated by the fact that though *The Bridge,* in its effort to be a synthesis of American myth and history, was *strategically* an epic, it was *tactically* a lyric, seeking to achieve that strategic epic goal through a disjunctive series of lyric epiphanies in its sections.

This Tate/Winters sense of *The Bridge* as a magnificent failure was accepted critical wisdom when I first read Crane in college in the early 1960s, though by the time I came to write my dissertation on the poem in graduate school a few years later, the situation had begun to change. The change was driven, it seems to me, by two factors: first, a more sophisticated reading of what Romanticism involved was making readers realize that much of the best twentieth-century English and American poetry was late Romantic; second, a generational change in attitudes in the mid-1960s made that vision of American origins (which Crane had created in *The Bridge* as a prophetic image of America's future) seem less a matter of extravagant optimism than one of practical necessity. Crane's vision of the pre-Columbian Indian world (to which he imaginatively journeyed back in the poem through his surrogate, the poetic quester) was one in which a native people, spiritually wed to the physical nature of their land, cultivated and cared for the environment as if it were a beloved parent or a spouse, rather than exploiting it. The prophetic vision of an eventual return to such an origin (which is to say, to the environmental attitudes it entailed) clearly struck a responsive chord with young people in the 1960s. Since then, it seems, the reputation of *The Bridge* has continued to increase as readers have come to see its vision of an American future (devoted to conserving the natural world) as a prophecy not romantically boisterous and naive but unavoidably realistic. In more recent years, *The Bridge* has been the subject of several helpful works that examine gay poetics or that study the question of poetic influence in the modern period, and the poem has been discussed tangentially in two new biographies of Crane. In 2006, the Library of America series recognized the importance of Crane's work by giving him his own volume (edited by Langdon Hammer). But the question of *The Bridge*'s essential unity, of an interpretation that integrates all the poem's disparate sections into a coherent whole, and of the way such an interpretation becomes the primary heuristic device in interpreting the rest of Crane's poetry has remained open and is the task to which this study addresses itself.

A word about the subtitle of this book. In high school and college I was under the thrall of T. S. Eliot's poetry and prose. For me, he defined what a

poet and critic were; yet as a young American interested in becoming both, I came to feel that Eliot, though both poet and critic, never seemed quite American enough. But when I first read Crane and came across lines like those in "The River" describing the freight-train-riding hobos as "Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods" or in "The Harbor Dawn," "a truck will lumber past the wharves / As winch engines begin throbbing on some deck; / Or a drunken stevedore's howl and thud below / Come echoing alley-upward through dim snow," I immediately recognized both the vocabulary and sound of American speech. The sentence that serves as my subtitle comes from a May 1922 letter from Crane to his friend Gorham Munson. Discussing Matthew Josephson's championing in the magazine *Secession* of the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire's avant-gardism, Crane reacts against the notion that his own work should "harmonize" with any school or group of modern writers, holding out for the freedom to be himself and American, and not a faux European: "I am interested in possibilities. Appollinaire lived in Paris, I live in Cleveland, Ohio" (Crane 276). Whether Crane knew that he had misspelled Apollinaire's name, didn't care, or did it on purpose (he had misspelled it differently a few sentences earlier in the letter), his gesture of specifying the state in which Cleveland is located precisely to emphasize that no one need specify Paris's location seems like a turning of the fate of provincialism into a power (to recall Emerson's formula), a defiant gesture worthy of Stevens's "inchling" who "bristles in these pines" and says, "Your world is you. I am my world." It was that aspect of Crane's poetry that first attracted me to it, and the lifelong study of that poetry ultimately made Crane for me a more important poet than Eliot.

While writing my dissertation on *The Bridge* and teaching Crane's poetry once every year for most of the past forty, my admiration for his writing has never diminished; indeed, that admiration kept me working on this book over several decades. Though the manuscript was often put aside during those years in order to complete other writing projects, it was always returned to, and now it is completed. It is the second book in a larger work of triangulation that I projected in the preface to *The Mystery to a Solution* as a three-book suite dealing with four writers—Poe and Borges in the first, Crane in the second, and Scott Fitzgerald in the third. In that preface I described the extended project as an examination of a structure that the four authors' works shared, one governing these authors' "relationship to their art and thematized in their work" (xv). This structure grew

> out of each writer's engagement with Platonic idealism, specifically, their more or less conscious understanding of the allegory of the cave as a womb fantasy that translated the notion of origin (and thus of the self) from a physical to a mental plane and their further understanding that this fantasized return to origin could be assimilated to another structure governing their relationship to their art: that sense of the male artist's ability (personified in the muse) to conceive and give birth to the work, the artist's identification with the muse-as-mother. What animates the art of these four writers in varying ways is a

> structure whose underpinning is the desire for a total return to the matrix (the space of origin and of original power), but a return *wholly on the son's own terms.*' (xv–xvi)

As I write this introduction, several chapters of the Fitzgerald book have already been completed.

All that remains to do here is to acknowledge, and express my gratitude to, those people who fostered my early interest in Crane, gave help and advice in writing this book, or published parts of it in magazines or anthologies. The first is my friend and mentor, the late Monroe K. Spears, who directed my dissertation on *The Bridge* at Rice University, a dissertation that grew out of a seminar paper I had originally written for another friend and teacher at Rice, David Minter. Of the many people who through conversations or suggestions contributed to my understanding of Crane's work, I would mention Harold Bloom, John Hollander, the late Joe Riddel, J. Hillis Miller, Richard Macksey, Pier-Massimo Forni, Matthew Roller, Francis Mondimore, and Paul Feldman. The magazine editors who published parts of the book were John Dixon Hunt at *Word & Image,* Richard Poirier at *Raritan Review,* and Edgar Dryden at *Arizona Quarterly.* Additionally, Kenneth Johnston and Herbert Marks reprinted in their collection *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory* the essay on Crane that originally appeared in *Raritan Review*. Needless to say, any excellences in this book are partly due to the aforementioned individuals; any faults in it are all my own. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the generosity of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, which awarded me a fellowship to work on this study.

§ 1
The Pictorial and the Poetic; *The Bridge* as a Prophetic Vision of Origins

In a 1927 letter to his benefactor Otto Kahn outlining the plan and progress of *The Bridge,* Hart Crane noted that each section of the poem "is a separate canvas, as it were, yet none yields its entire significance when seen apart from the others. One might take the Sistine Chapel as an analogy."[1] Crane's remark is characteristic of his comments on the overall construction of *The Bridge* in that it compares the poem's verbal structure to works of visual art—paintings, architecture, or a combination of the two (paintings of architectural subjects or works of architecture in which paintings are an integral part of the structure's interior, as in the Sistine Chapel). Indeed, Crane describes the résumé of the poem he sent Kahn as "a commentary on my architectural method" (555).

In those few instances where Crane uses a musical image for poetic structure, he usually applies it to a single section of the poem rather than to the whole work, as when he tells Kahn that the "Cutty Sark" section "is built on the plan of a *fugue.* Two 'voices'—that of the world of Time, and that of the world of Eternity—are interwoven in the action" (557). Yet even these musical images have a way of metamorphosing into those of painting or architecture, as in his description of the poem's concluding "Atlantis" section in a 1927 letter to Yvor Winters: "It aspires a little (perhaps far too much!) to the famous Pater-ian 'frozen music,' i.e. it may rely too much on a familiarity with the unique architecture of Brooklyn Bridge, to me the most superb and original example of an American architecture yet hinted at" (539)—a curious remark conflating Pater's dictum from *The Renaissance* that "*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*" with Friedrich Schlegel's description of architecture as "frozen music." In his comparisons of poetic and visual structures, Crane almost always has a specific visual work in mind, whether it be the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, El Greco's *Agony in the Garden,* Joseph Stella's paintings of Brooklyn Bridge, or the physical structure of the bridge itself. In contrast, Crane's comparisons of poetic structures to musical forms never mention specific musical works. What we find instead are broad, impressionistic statements, like his remark that the "verbal dynamics . . . and the spacious periodicity of the rhythm" in "Ave Maria" and "Atlantis" result "in an unusually symphonic form" (441) or that at the beginning of "The River" the "rhythm is jazz" (556).

Crane's tendency to describe *The Bridge*'s overall structure in pictorial or architectural terms rather than musical ones stems in part from the fact that, though visual art and music were both important influences on his work, the artistic environment in which his talent first developed was made up almost exclusively of painters and writers, so that his earliest technical models of artistic form other than literary were painterly. Philip Horton suggests, for example, that Crane's early discussions of painting with the artist William Sommer, as well as the sketches and watercolors that Crane did under Sommer's tutelage, "served to sharpen and crystallize his aware-

ness of the possibilities in his own medium" of verse (Horton 110). Horton contends that Crane's "enthusiastic study of modern painting" influenced the structure of the later, more complex poems in *White Buildings,* in that Crane's "attitude towards them was primarily plastic. He considered them not as vehicles of thought so much as bodies of the impalpable substance of language to be molded into aesthetically self-sufficient and complete units" (177–78). In addition to Sommer's early influence, there were Crane's friendships with the artists Carl Schmitt and Richard Rychtarik, the architect William Lescaze, and the photographer and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz, not to mention Crane's wide range of acquaintances among prominent artists of the day—Gaston Lachaise, Marsden Hartley, Peter Blume, Joseph Stella, Georgia O'Keeffe, and David Siqueiros (who painted Crane's portrait in Mexico). In his letters, Crane's references to paintings and visual artists outnumber his references to music and composers five to one.

It seems predictable that Crane would use analogues from the visual arts to describe the structure of a poem whose central symbol is a work of architecture, a poem for whose first edition Crane had wanted to use one of Stella's visionary paintings of Brooklyn Bridge as an emblematic frontispiece (605) (see fig. 1.1). And this would be a natural enough expectation were it not for the fact that the whole point of Crane's symbolic bridge is that its structure is meant to represent the fusion of time and space, of musical and pictorial form, in a visionary synthesis. Moreover, for all of Crane's comparisons of poetic to pictorial form, he never attempts in the poem any significant pictographic or ideographic representation of its content. *The Bridge* does contain brief passages (like the description of the plane crash in "Cape Hatteras") where the arrangement of lines on the page visually evokes the action described in the text, though in most of these passages the action is always the same—a fall or descent, typographically mimed by an intentionally erratic cascade of words down the page. And it is also true that, in a letter to Winters, Crane described the final part of "Cutty Sark" as "pure calligrame"—by which he meant that the "line-end word divisions and all have an organic purpose" and that he would not "allow it to be printed in any detail other than the mss designates" (Parkinson 14). But Crane did not intend in either instance that the arrangement of the words produce a picture or emblem of the poem's subject, as was the case, for example, with many of the poems in Apollinaire's *Calligrammes.* And certainly none of the instances of evocative lineation or word division in the poem has any significant relationship to the poem's overall structure. Whatever the spatial form of *The Bridge* involves, it is clearly not a matter of those "calligraphic tricks" that, as Crane noted in his essay "General Aims and Theories," are "used so brilliantly at times by an impressionist like Cummings" (162), Crane's friend who was both painter and poet. The surface form of the poem is temporal, sequential, and, in that sense, musical, moving in time from beginning to end.

Yet, having said that by way of counterbalance, I would still emphasize that in his prose descriptions of the poem's overall structure Crane drew his comparisons almost exclusively from the visual arts. This practice was an

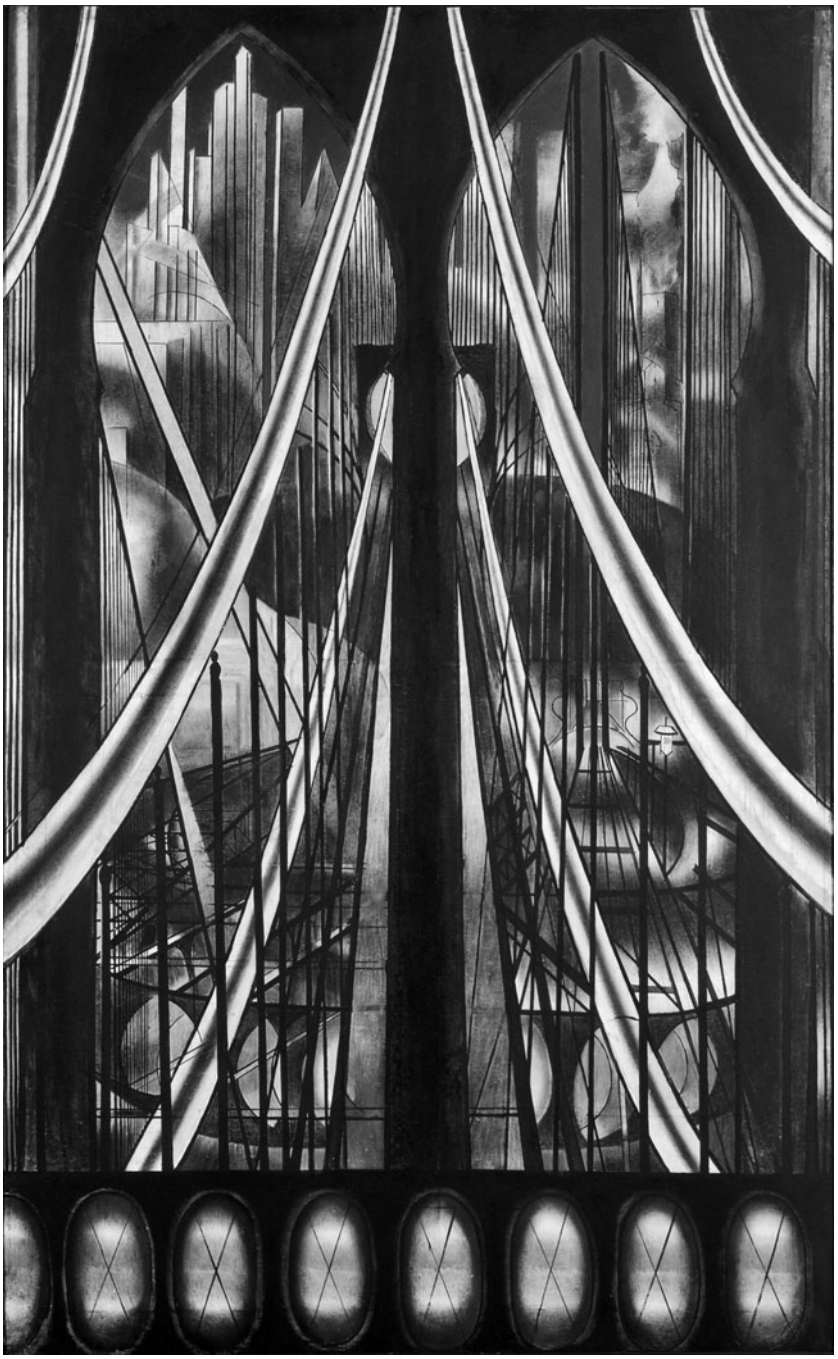

Figure 1.1. Joseph Stella, *The Voice of the City of New York Interpreted: The Bridge, 1920–22.* Oil and tempera on canvas, 88½ × 54 in. The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ. Photograph by Newark Museum / Art Resource, NY.

expression not just of his faithfulness, as a literalist of the imagination, to the visual component of prophetic vision, to the literal modes of sight that inform the notion of prophetic insight, but also of his faithfulness to a specific tradition in the pictorial representation of prophetic vision in Western art and, more specifically still, to that pictorial tradition as interpreted by Oswald Spengler in his discussion of the development of perspective in Western painting in *The Decline of the West* (1918).

Crane read the first volume of *The Decline of the West* in June and July of 1926 on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, just prior to his most productive period of work on *The Bridge,* during which the various strands of the poem coalesced into an overall design. In a letter to Waldo Frank that August, Crane describes Spengler's at first disabling and then, by a curious reversal, enabling effect on the writing of the poem, adding that reading him "was perhaps a very good experience for ripening some of *The Bridge,*" since it seemed, along with other "circumstances," to have "conspired in a strangely symbolical way toward the present speed of my work" (484).

To understand the specific influence *The Decline of the West* had on the pictorially based structure of Crane's poem, we must first examine certain conventions of the visual representation of prophetic vision in late Gothic and Renaissance art, then discuss Spengler's interpretation of the development of perspective in Renaissance painting, and then briefly analyze how Spengler's reading of the culture-symbol of perspective in Western art established the pictorial background upon which the notion of visionary perspective draws in shaping both the form and content of *The Bridge*.

As a preliminary, let me make clear the sense in which I understand *The Bridge* to be a prophetic vision of origins. The central action of the poem is an imaginative quest that begins in "The Harbor Dawn" section with the quester's dream vision of his union with a mysterious woman whom he will later discover is the Indian maiden Pocahontas, symbol of the virgin continent. The quest then "progresses backwards" (556) through symbolic moments in the history of the American spirit until it reaches the pre-Columbian, Indian world of "The Dance," where the quester witnesses, in the sacred marriage of the chieftain Maquokeeta and the virgin Pocahontas, a primal scene of origin in which time and space, American history and environment, mythic lore and physical land are conjoined in a "mystical" union whose emblem is the bird-serpent, the Indian symbol of the conjunction of opposites—the serpent of time and the eagle of space, as Crane describes it.

Having seen the origin of this American higher consciousness, the poetic quester, in his return journey to the present, again passes through a series of symbolic moments in the history of the American spirit, moments that show the gradual loss of that original, visionary world as the white man's materialism submerged the mythic Amerindian nature-world. Crane's symbol of that submerged world is the ancient continent of Atlantis, sunk beneath the sea by the gods because of its inhabitants' materialism. In the process of showing us the gradual loss of that original world, the quester also shows us that symbolic traces of it still remain and that

throughout American history visionaries like Whitman, Poe, and Emily Dickinson have used these traces in their work to evoke the image of an ideal America. Finally, in the concluding "Atlantis" section, the quester presents us with his "mystical synthesis of 'America,'" (321), a radically foreshortened, more abstract vision of our origin and history than that presented in the body of the poem. But that vision of the past is also a prophecy of the future, for in the Platonic, circular time-system that underlies the poem's view of history, the ultimate destiny of America is a return to its origin. Like the sunken Atlantis, the submerged world of American origins is destined to reemerge when the visions of individual seers such as Poe, Whitman, Dickinson, and Crane dominate the materialist worldview and become the shared mythos of all Americans.

From this synopsis we can see that for Crane prophetic vision involves the ability to look backward into the past as a means of looking forward into the future, the ability to see, as if within a single frame, events so widely separated in time and space that in real life no individual could ever observe them in a single physical glimpse. This ability to see the future by looking into the past implies, of course, that past events foreshadow future ones, and so one of the things we must begin by examining is the way the literary notion of foreshadowing or prefiguration acquires a progressively complex visual syntax in late Gothic and Renaissance art.

§ 2
The Visual Structure of Prophetic Vision; a Simultaneous Glimpse Before and Behind

Let us start by considering Henri Bellechose's painting *Altarpiece of St. Denis with Scenes from His Life* (fig. 2.1) from the Charterhouse of Champmol, now in the Louvre. Completed at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the picture is a good example of a work of art produced during a transition period between two different traditions of visual representation, in that its Byzantine gold background thwarts the sense of spatial depth that its foreground attempts to convey by means of overlapping contours and a series of visually inconsistent diminutions and foreshortenings—"a curious combination of cult image and historical narrative" in Erwin Panofsky's words (1:83–85). The foreground of the painting is a characteristic moment in the history of Western art's progress from pictorial devices that signify the idea of spatial depth to devices that create the visual illusion of depth. In this painting the atemporal or eternal icon of the Crucifixion intersects the horizontal, left-to-right timeline of the historical narrative in such a way that all three events occupy a continuous, visually integrated foreground. If one did not know in advance the identities and relationships of the people in the painting, one might assume by reading these events left to right (like panels in a comic strip) that the individual shown ministering to the person in prison was subsequently crucified and that then the prisoner was beheaded.

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§ 2
The Visual Structure of Prophetic Vision; a Simultaneous Glimpse Before and Behind

Let us start by considering Henri Bellechose's painting *Altarpiece of St. Denis with Scenes from His Life* (fig. 2.1) from the Charterhouse of Champmol, now in the Louvre. Completed at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the picture is a good example of a work of art produced during a transition period between two different traditions of visual representation, in that its Byzantine gold background thwarts the sense of spatial depth that its foreground attempts to convey by means of overlapping contours and a series of visually inconsistent diminutions and foreshortenings—"a curious combination of cult image and historical narrative" in Erwin Panofsky's words (1:83–85). The foreground of the painting is a characteristic moment in the history of Western art's progress from pictorial devices that signify the idea of spatial depth to devices that create the visual illusion of depth. In this painting the atemporal or eternal icon of the Crucifixion intersects the horizontal, left-to-right timeline of the historical narrative in such a way that all three events occupy a continuous, visually integrated foreground. If one did not know in advance the identities and relationships of the people in the painting, one might assume by reading these events left to right (like panels in a comic strip) that the individual shown ministering to the person in prison was subsequently crucified and that then the prisoner was beheaded.

Though the event depicted at the panel's center clearly dominates those on either side and thus could be presumed of greater importance, the visual clues do not indicate that the central event was separated in time and place from the last communion and martyrdom of St. Denis, bishop of Paris and patron saint of France. Rather, these clues—such as the overlapping of the contour of the cross by the halo of the severed head and the handle of the headman's axe—place the central event physically in the midst of those on either side. Clearly, the painting's organization of events has been influenced by the narrative structure of a triptych, where the order center-left-right would be a conventional narrative sequence. Yet it is the very fact that the painting is not a triptych—that the three events have not been painted on three separate panels but have been visually integrated within the single picture space—that is of interest; for it is precisely that spatial integration of events widely separated in time that points up the temporal or sequential ambiguity of the painting's visual syntax. On a horizontal timeline the central event is out of sequence.

This is not to say that the fifteenth-century Christians who viewed the painting would have been confused about its symbolic significance. As they would have understood, the painting makes visible the typological relationship between Christ and a figure of Christ. But what makes the painting significant for our purposes is that, standing as it does with one foot in an older, iconic tradition and the other in a newer, naturalistic one, it illustrates the technical problem the artist faced in trying to align the older tradition's symbolic representation of metaphysical relationships with the newer one's visually consistent, perspectival representation of physical relationships. Or, to put it another way, the artist was faced with the problem of whether the temporal, literary notion of prefiguration could be integrated into the new pictorial preoccupation with the illusion of depth, whether the old notion of foreshadowing could be expressed in the new visual syntax of foreshortening, whether a painting could be both theologically exact and visually convincing.

To understand what is at issue here, consider another painting of the same period from the Charterhouse of Champmol—Melchior Broederlam's rendering of the Annunciation, Visitation, Presentation in the Temple, and Flight into Egypt (1394–99) on the exterior of a pair of wooden shutters for an altarpiece, now in the Musée de Ville at Dijon (figs. 2.2 and 2.3). The four moments from the Gospel story are organized along a horizontal timeline running from left to right, two moments per panel, with a further separation between moments being provided by the alternation of indoor and outdoor settings. One reads the events by moving in the same left-to-right direction that one uses in reading the written story from which they were taken. Though the artist has expended great effort in creating a sense of depth in the landscapes and the architectural interiors, he has made no significant use of that pictorial depth in visually organizing the narrative sequence of the four events, a sequence that proceeds horizontally across the foreground virtually unaffected by the perspectival splendors behind it.

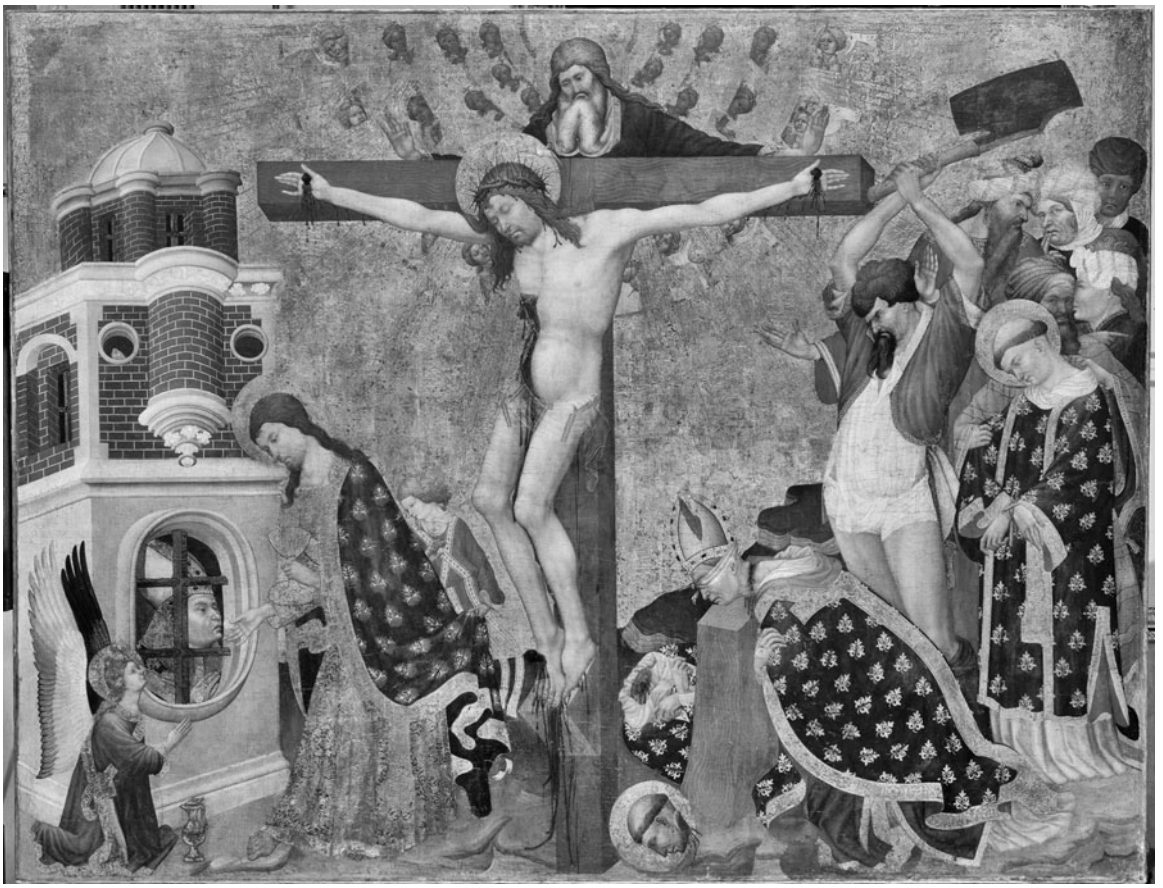

Figure 2.1. Henri Bellechose, *Altarpiece of Saint Denis with Scenes from His Life,* finished in 1416. Tempera on wood panel, 63½ × 82¾ in. Louvre, Paris, France. Photograph by Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

Now compare Broederlam's rendering of the Annunciation with the Sienese painter Giovanni di Paolo's version of the same subject from around 1445 (fig. 2.4). As with Broederlam's panels, the events in Paolo's painting are organized in a temporal sequence that runs from left to right, but in this case the timeline along which the events are located, instead of running horizontally across the foreground of the painting, begins within its painted depth and intersects the picture plane on a diagonal. From the present of the foreground, we look back along an oblique line into the past. At the farthest point of figuration (upper left), we see the origin of all things, God the Father; then, in the middle ground, the beginning of the human race as Adam and Eve are driven from the garden to begin the work of procreation (iconographically suggested by the hares playing on the tapestry-like lawn). Finally, in the foreground, we see the Virgin, a descendant of that line of human procreation, at the moment when a divine procreation begins the work of redeeming Adam and Eve's descendants and reorienting that line of descent (visually evoked by the timeline de-

Figure 2.2. Melchior Broederlam, *Annunciation and Visitation,* 1394. Panel, 64 × 51 in. Musee des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, France. Photograph by Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

scending diagonally from God to the Virgin) back toward its divine origin, a reorientation indicated here by the artist's making St. Joseph, the human stepfather (sequestered in the spatial depth at lower right), face in the direction of that divine origin at upper left.

In the Broederlam panels the narrative's horizontal, left-to-right timeline is parallel to the picture plane, and the viewer's gaze at right angles to it. Broederlam has condensed the Gospel narrative so that four events, separated in time and place, are now combined in a single painting, and this reduction of the narrative to a series of symbolic moments, this purely *literary* foreshortening of the narrative, is the only type that affects the timeline

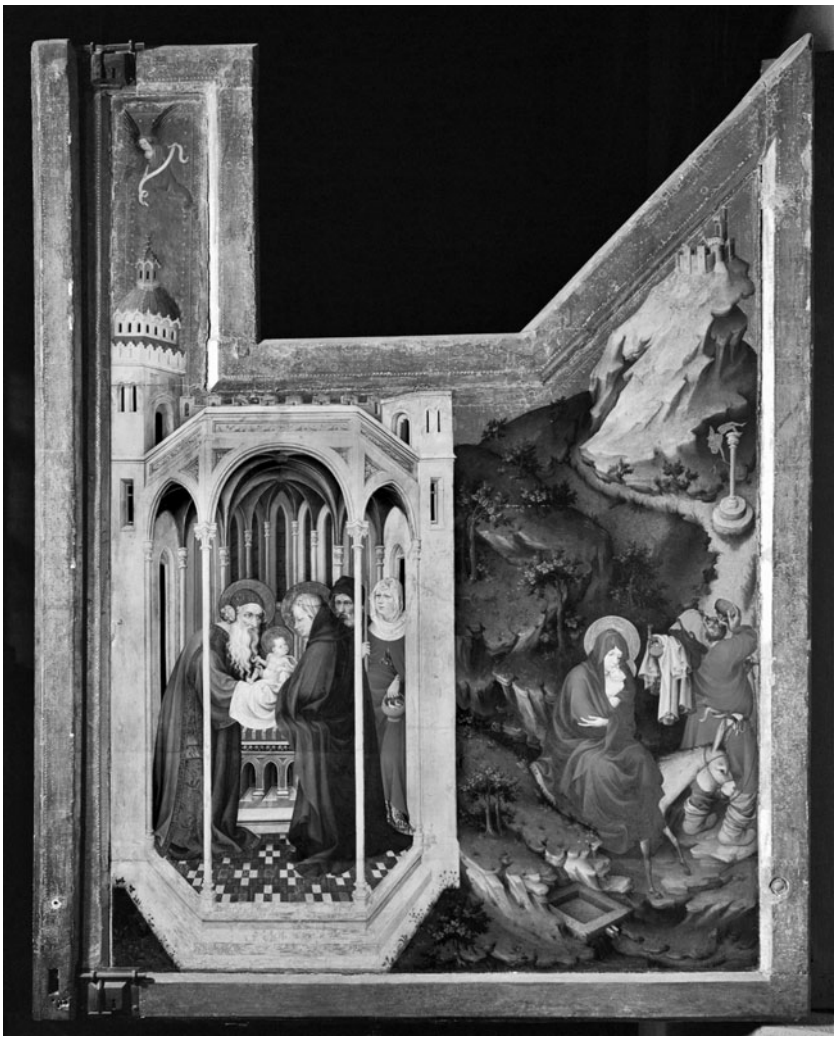

Figure 2.3. Melchior Broederlam, *Presentation in the Temple; Rest on the Flight into Egypt,* 1394. Panel, 64 × 51 in. Musee des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, France. Photograph by Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

in Broederlam's painting. But in Giovanni di Paolo's *Annunciation,* the narrative foreshortening that brings together within a single frame these two events from the Old and New Testaments (the Expulsion from the Garden and the Annunciation) depends upon the perspectival foreshortening that created the illusory depth within which the two are visually linked, linked as a graphic display of their prefigurative connection. In Giovanni's painting the sense of foreshadowing is a function of a combined literary and visual foreshortening.

A fully elaborated example of this pictorial equation of time and spatial depth can be seen in a painting (in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest) of the Crucifixion from around 1480 by an unknown North Netherlandish master. The foreground shows the moment of Christ's death on the cross

Figure 2.4. Giovanni di Paolo, *The Annunciation and Expulsion from Paradise,* ca. 1435. Tempera on panel, 15¾ × 18¼ in. Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

between two thieves (with the bystanders wearing medieval garb), while the background shows an earlier moment leading up to the Crucifixion—Christ carrying the cross from Jerusalem (depicted as a Gothic town) to Golgotha.[1] Gazing into the visual space of this Crucifixion, we look from the present of the foreground into the past of the background. Any contemporary Christian seeing this painting would have understood the symbolic significance of that way of the cross running from Jerusalem to Golgotha. He would have seen it as a symbol of the arduous pathway through life that awaits anyone who imitates Christ, a pathway that leads not from background to foreground, not from the old Jerusalem to the historic moment of the Crucifixion, but from foreground to background, from that eternal moment of the sacrifice of the cross (available at any moment in the sacrifice of the Mass) onward throughout the individual's life and beyond,

along that temporal path whose ultimate goal, as the book of Revelation tells us, is the New Jerusalem that will descend from heaven at the point where time ends. Looking at this painting, a Christian would see an image of the past that—because of the Crucifixion's circularization of time, a redemption of history that reverses the historical timeline's direction, curving it back towards its origin—is also a prophetic vision of the future.

The development of the perspectival depth/time equation for organizing the sequence of events within a single frame did not, of course, abolish the older horizontal narrative sequence. Indeed, the two were frequently combined to produce works of extraordinary narrative complexity, as in Rogier van der Weyden's *St. John Altarpiece* (c. 1452–55) in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. The narrative sequence of the panels in the triptych—the Birth and Naming of St. John, the Baptism of Christ, and the Martyrdom of St. John—runs horizontally from left to right, with the reliefs on the archevaults of the portals presenting moments from the lives of John the Baptist and Christ illustrating the prefigurative relationship between them. Within the painted depth of the left panel (fig. 2.5), the sequential vector runs from background (the birth of John) to foreground (his naming); within the right (fig. 2.7) from foreground (the beheading of John) to background (the presentation of his head on a platter); while in the central panel (fig. 2.6), which contains the point of greatest apparent depth, the artist has not made use of the background to present a sequence of events. The appearance of God the Father in the heavens as John baptizes Jesus is, of course, part of the event depicted in the foreground.

The triptych as a whole, then, shows us three stages of a single human life from birth to death, and it depicts the temporal progression within that life as a movement in opposite directions (toward the viewer in the left panel and away from the viewer in the right) on either side of an unmoving divine center. In this configuration the viewer gazes in the left panel from the present of the foreground into the past and in the right panel from the present of the foreground into the future. This simultaneous glimpse into the past and future represents, in terms of human time, what a visionary glimpse into eternity would be like—as if the heavens had opened and revealed the face of God, as in the central panel. We might note in this connection that when the artist William Lescaze did a sketch of Crane in which he emphasized the right eye as the focus of the composition, Crane interpreted the prominence given to one eye over the other as "in accordance with a dictum of Jacob Boehme, the German Mystic, to the effect that the right eye of a man looks forward into eternity while the left eye looks backward in him into time, and that until the eye of time is brought into the eye of eternity a man will not achieve the unity of vision" (Horton 115–16). And this notion would have recalled for Crane a passage from another of his favorite writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who in discussing "the problem of restoring to the world original and ideal beauty" claims, "The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque. The reason why the world lacks unity,

Figure 2.5. Rogier van der Weyden, *Birth and Namegiving of Saint John the Baptist,* left panel of the *Saint John Altarpiece,* ca. 1455. Oil on oak, 30¼ × 19 in. Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Photograph by Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.

Figure 2.6. Rogier van der Weyden, *Baptism of Christ,* central panel of the *Saint John Altarpiece,* ca. 1455. Oil on oak, 30¼ × 19 in. Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Photograph by Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

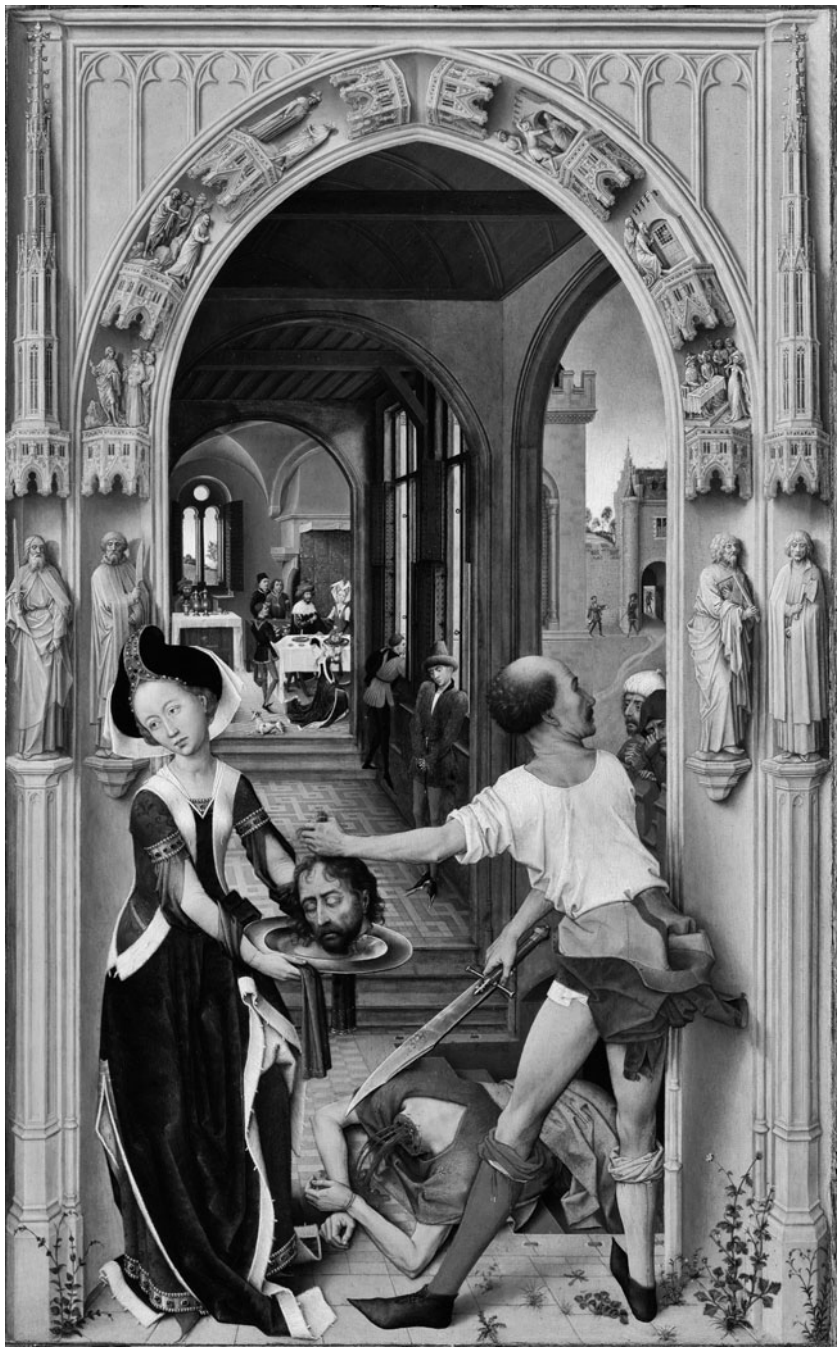

Figure 2.7. Rogier van der Weyden, *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist,* right panel of the *Saint John Altarpiece,* ca. 1455. Oil on oak, 30¼ × 19 in. Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Photograph by Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.

and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself" (1:73–74). Crane used the Boehme image of the poet as a seer with one eye looking into eternity and the other into time in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," and the fusion of temporal and eternal vision, the bringing of "the eye of time . . . into the eye of eternity," is, of course, the goal of the poetic quester in *The Bridge.*

This sense of simultaneously looking backward and forward in time is evoked again in van der Weyden's *Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments* (Musée Royal, Antwerp) dating from the same period (fig. 2.8). The altarpiece, designed by van der Weyden and executed by one of his assistants, is noteworthy in that the picture is a nonfolding triptych, yet it depicts a single visual space—the interior of a church, its northern side-aisle shown in the left panel, its nave and the rear of the southern side-aisle in the center, and the front of the southern side-aisle in the right panel.

Though the sacraments are represented as if they are being simultaneously conferred within a single church, their arrangement within that space reflects the temporal order of the stages in life associated with each, in effect illustrating man's progress from birth to death. Beginning with the left panel (fig. 2.9) we move from Baptism in the foreground to Confirmation in the middle ground and on to Penance in the background, then from left to right into the background of the central panel where the Eucharist is being elevated by the priest at Mass, then from left to right again into the background of the right panel and forward to Holy Orders and Matrimony and finally to Extreme Unction in the foreground (fig. 2.10). The side panels give the impression of the human timeline moving in opposite directions (toward the background in the left and toward the foreground in the right), an effect created because we are looking into half of an oval whose center is the gigantic Crucifixion in the central panel's foreground (the eternal moment that curved human history back toward its divine origin) and whose arch, between the timelines of the side panels, is the Eucharist (the reenactment within time of that eternal moment).

This arrangement of the sacraments in two lines along the side aisles connected by the arch or keystone of the Eucharist reproduces the shape of the building's arches and of the Gothic portals that frame each panel. Indeed, it is as if the portal framing the central panel had been tilted backward ninety degrees onto the floor of the church to provide the perimeter around which the sacraments are arranged, in much the same way that the cruciform shape dominating the central panel's foreground has also been, in a sense, tilted backward ninety degrees, casting its "shadow" on the floor in the church's cruciform plan of nave and transept. And this same sense of shadowing or mirroring is evoked by the relationship of foreground and background moments in the central panel; for as the body of Christ has been raised up on the cross, so the body of Christ in the form of the Eucharist is raised up at the Elevation, the connection of the two moments being made explicit in the words on the pennant the angel unfurls above the altar: "Hic *panis*, manu *sancti spiritus* formatus in *virgine,* / Igne passionis est decoctus in cruce. / Ambrosius in Sacramentis" ("This bread,

Figure 2.8. Rogier van der Weyden, *Altar of the Seven Sacraments,* before 1450. Center panel: the Eucharist. Left panel: Baptism, Confirmation, and Penance. Right panel: Ordination, Marriage, and Extreme Unction. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Belgium. Photograph by Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

formed by the hand of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin, was cooked by the fire of the Passion on the Cross.—Ambrose in *The Sacraments*"). The central panel's shadowing or mirroring of foreground and background moments evokes a sense of the circularity of human time seen from an eternal viewpoint.

Panofsky contends that the marriage scene in the right panel "reveals the influence of Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait" (1:283) in the detail of the griffon terrier, but I would suggest that the central panel's composition may also show in a particularly subtle way another influence of van Eyck's famous painting (fig. 2.11). One of the most striking details in the Arnolfini portrait is the convex mirror on the chamber's rear wall, a mirror in which we see reflected not only the backs of the bride and groom but also the

Figure 2.9. Rogier van der Weyden, *Altar of the Seven Sacraments,* before 1450. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Belgium. Photograph by Scala/Art Resource, NY.

figures of van Eyck and another man entering the chamber. Looking into the picture space, we see simultaneously in opposite directions, forward and backward, both the scene the artist saw in front of him and the artist himself (behind us), whose godlike eye (symbolically represented within the painting by the eye-like convex mirror) reflects the natural world in creating the portrait.[2] The symbolic mirroring between the central panel's foreground and background moments in the Seven Sacraments altarpiece suggests van Eyck's possible influence. In a circular time system—a system whose ultimate end is a return to origin—the goal of life's temporal

Figure 2.10. Rogier van der Weyden, *Altar of the Seven Sacraments,* before 1450. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Belgium. Photograph by Scala/Art Resource, NY.

Figure 2.11. Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of Giovanni(?) Arnolfini and His Wife,* 1434. Oil on oak, 32½ × 23½ in. National Gallery, London, Great Britain. Copyright National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.

journey is at once ahead of and behind us, and thus seeing a vision of the future in such a system frequently means seeing either a reflected image of what lies behind us (as if in a mirror) or a shadow (cast over our shoulder on the ground in front of us) of something that lies above and behind. In the background of the central panel, the priest, standing at the main altar, looks in front of him at the Eucharist raised above his head, and that white wafer, like the round shiny mirror in the Arnolfini portrait, shows him in effect an image of that ultimate origin behind his back, the body of Christ elevated on the cross.

Before leaving this subject, we should note that both of the van der Weyden triptychs we've cited make the horizontally arranged narrative divisions between the incidents depicted in their panels coincide with the divisions of an architectural structure. In the St. John altarpiece the left and right panels display the interiors of apartments, with the central panel showing a portico between them that opens onto a landscape. And in the Seven Sacraments altarpiece the central panel shows a church's nave, and its wings the side-aisles. This coincidence of narrative and architectural divisions suggests yet another structural element from paintings of this period that seems to be reflected in Crane's construction of *The Bridge.* Discussing how classical memory systems organized and stored information by situating striking images at various structurally distinct places within a building, Frances Yates notes in *The Art of Memory* that "the high Gothic cathedral" was a nest of such memory places (79), as suggested by Panofsky. Spengler gives a similar reading, noting that the "web of countless figures and reliefs" in these churchs reflected what "Joachim of Floris, at this very time, was seeing in his Apulian cell—the picture of the world, not as Cosmos, but as a Divine History and succession of three world-ages—[which] the craftsmen were expressing at Reims, Amiens and Paris in serial presentation of it from the Fall to his Last Judgment" (1:261).

These ordered memory places (called *topoi* or *loci*) were arranged along a pathway that ran through various parts of an architectural space, a path that was memorized along with the images and places. Discussing the overall structure that organized these memory places, Quintilian in his *Institutio oratoria* says, "What I have spoken of as being done in a house can also be done in public buildings, or on a long journey, or in going through a city, or with pictures" (Yates, *Art* 22).

In this connection we should note that the fifteenth century also saw the stations of the cross become a standard feature of the interiors of European churches. Consisting of painted or sculpted scenes from Christ's Passion, the stations of the cross (whose number was eventually fixed at fourteen) are usually placed around a church's interior perimeter to form a path that the person who performs the ritual follows, stopping at each station to meditate on the scene depicted there. It seems clear that the individual Christian was meant to commit the scenes and their order to memory as he walked in Jesus's footsteps, which is to say that these scenes were understood to be of such importance to a believer's daily life that he had to remember them if he hoped to be remembered in turn by Jesus on the last day. And it seems likely that the flourishing of this ritualized, ecclesiastical form of memory system during the fifteenth century was directly related to the century's interest in classical memory systems. As we shall see later, the "Atlantis" section of *The Bridge* depends in crucial ways on the topological use of architectural memory places like those described by Yates. Crane himself suggested this when he expressed his concern to Winters that the poem's meaning might "rely too much on a familiarity with the unique architecture of Brooklyn Bridge." (A central structural element of

the Brooklyn Bridge is, after all, its two massive stone towers whose twin arches and gigantic masonry evoke a Gothic cathedral.)

§ 3
Spengler's Reading of Perspective as a Culture-Symbol

Keeping in mind our discussion of late Gothic and Renaissance techniques in representing prophetic vision, consider Spengler's interpretation in *The Decline of the West* of the development of perspective in Western painting. His tendentious cultural history is based on the Goethean notion of an organic cycle governing the growth and decay of human institutions. Spengler uses as a touchstone for his comparison of different cultures the way each deals with what he considers the prime symbol of human self-consciousness—the experience of spatial depth as time become rigid. Since one of the principal ways a culture expresses its "world-feeling" as a "world-image" is in the arts, Spengler (in his attempt to show that the period from 1800 to 2000 AD represents the decline of the West) compares the historical cycles that music and the visual arts have gone through in three distinct cultures—the classical Greco-Roman, the Arabian, and the European (from the tenth century to the present), designating the three as the Apollinian, the Magian, and the Faustian, respectively. Since Magian art absorbs little of Spengler's attention, his discussion becomes in effect a comparison of the Apollinian and Faustian worlds. Moreover, since music was not as highly developed or as extensive a cultural phenomenon in ancient Greece as in Baroque Europe and since our knowledge of how ancient music actually sounded is largely conjectural, Spengler's discussion tends, more specifically, to oppose ancient Greek architecture, sculpture, and painting against Western European architecture, sculpture, painting, and music of the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo periods. Seen in this light, Spengler's discussion of the arts locates itself within a tradition that runs from Winckelmann to Goethe to Schopenhauer to Nietzsche to Pater to Yeats, a tradition of what might be called the uncertain or uneasy marriage of Faust and Helen.[1]

Spengler belongs to this tradition not because he believes that the marriage of the Faustian and Hellenic cultures is possible (indeed, one of his basic assumptions is that a dead culture, such as the Hellenic, can never be reborn) but rather because he considers Faustian culture's fascination with that illusory vision of Hellenic culture (which it has created as a counter-image of itself) is a prime phenomenon in the development of the West. Because Faustian culture's desire to be united with its illusory counterimage is so important a part of the process by which the Faustian achieved its own identity, Spengler, as a member of that culture, cannot wholly free himself from that desire even though he knows it to be based on an illusion. He remarks that Renaissance Florence created "an image of the Classical so convincing that, although its deeper characters were without exception

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mere anti-Gothic, it lasted beyond Goethe and, if not for our criticism, yet for our feelings, is valid to this day" (1:237).

As Goethe symbolized for Pater the happy marriage of the Faustian spirit with Hellenism, so Michelangelo symbolizes for Spengler the stormy, destructive marriage of the Faustian spirit with its classical counterimage. The countermovements of these two spirits (Faustian and Apollinian) within Michelangelo's artistic nature produced

> the fragmentary, the tortured, the unsatisfied, the *terrible* in his forms that frightened his contemporaries. The one half of his nature drew him towards the Classical and therefore to sculpture . . . the element which Goethe meant to render when he brought Helena into the Second Part of Faust, the Apollinian world in all its powerful sensuous corporeal presence—that was what Michelangelo was striving with all his might to capture and to fix in artistic being when he was painting the Sistine ceiling. Every resource of fresco—the big contours, the vast surfaces, the immense nearness of naked shapes, the materiality of colour—was here for the last time strained to the utmost to liberate the paganism, the high-Renaissance paganism, that was in him. But his second soul, the soul of Gothic-Christian Dante and of the music of great expanses, is pulling in the opposite sense; his scheme for the ensemble is manifestly metaphysical in spirit. (Spengler 1:275–76)

This tradition of imaging the idealized union of Western scientific knowledge and classical beauty as the marriage of Faustus and Helen forms part of the cultural background not only for Crane's eponymous poem (though in that poem Crane is only too aware that this marriage may be based on "*the love of things irreconcilable*") but also for *The Bridge,* which Crane originally planned as a thematic continuation of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." In *The Bridge,* however, the two worldviews to be wed are not the modern Western and the ancient Greek, as in the earlier poem, but the modern American (Western scientific) and the ancient American Indian (which Crane, following Whitman, associates with Eastern wisdom), and the two parties to that union are not Faustus and Helen but the poetic quester and the Indian maiden Pocahontas. Just as Spengler sees in Michelangelo's "Sistine ceiling" the uneasy marriage of the Faustian spirit with its Hellenic counterimage, so Crane compares the overall structure of *The Bridge*'s Americanized version of the marriage of Faustus and Helen to the interrelationship of the individual Sistine paintings. To understand the full significance of Crane's comparison, we must examine Spengler's view of the opposing characteristics of the Faustian and Apollinian cultures as revealed by their chief arts.

In terms of Spengler's prime symbol of human self-consciousness (the experience of spatial depth as time become rigid), the opposing symbols of the Apollinian and Faustian are, respectively, the naked human body of classical sculpture and the limitless, bodiless space of Western music. According to Spengler, the ancient Greeks conceived of the extended world as a collection of discrete, self-contained bodies, of "things as separate singulars in contrast to general nothingness" (1:237). For the Greeks the no-

tion of empty space as a thing distinct from bodies would have been meaningless. Bodies were perceived as magnitudes whose proportions reflected the Greek sense of number as measure, and thus, for the Greeks, life was a matter of the bodily, the here and now, of the extended world as the wholly become. Sculpture was their chief art, and the production of unchanging types was the artistic ideal of that sculpture.

In contrast to the basically static nature of the Apollinian, says Spengler, is the dynamic worldview of Faustian culture. Faustian man treats the extended world as the continually becoming rather than the wholly become. He sees it not as an aggregation of self-contained bodies but as a limitless field of ever-changing, energetic relationships that reflect his sense of number as relation. Consequently, the chief art of Faustian culture is polyphonic music, an art of "pure and unlimited motion" (1:231) within "*an infinite space of tone*" (1:230). For Faustian culture, life is a constant striving into the distance, a striving that breaks through all bounding surfaces in its movement towards infinity. "The directional energy of our church-naves and our storeyed façades, the depth-perspectives of our pictures, the march of our tragedy and narrative" (1:228) all reveal, says Spengler, the Faustian sense of life as historical directedness: "Western man lives in the *consciousness* of his becoming and his eyes are constantly upon past and future"; in contrast the Greeks lived "ahistorically," and since their artistic representations were not of personal histories but of idealized actions, "there is nothing so impersonal as Greek art" (1:264).

Since Spengler considers polyphonic music the principal artistic expression of that distinctive "Faustian craving" to overcome the material constraints of the body, that craving of the immaterial, energetic self "to be *alone* with endless space" (1:241), he ranks the various Western visual arts according to how close each comes to the ideal condition of Faustian music and by this criterion finds oil painting to be the chief Faustian visual art. In this context, Spengler presents the development of aerial and linear perspective as an expression of the Faustian passion for the infinite "*third dimension*" (1:313), and he then goes on to examine the relationship of this special kind of pictorial depth-representation both to the musical quality of Western painting and to that visionary farsightedness into distance which expressed itself in Western voyages of discovery from the fifteenth century onward.

Spengler's understanding of cultural self-definition as a dialectic in which the essential spirit of a culture first creates and then overcomes a counterimage of itself explains his interpretation of the development of perspective in Western painting. Thus the essential spirit of Faustian culture, which is Gothic or Northern European, worked out its destiny by generating within itself the image of a higher culture (that of the ancient Greco-Roman world) whose achievements the Faustian spirit strove to imitate and surpass, thereby actualizing its own unique style. This process, Spengler explains, was the work (and thus the ultimate meaning) of the Italian Renaissance.[2] And he sees this struggle (between the Gothic spirit of Faustianism and the Renaissance dream of restoring Greco-Roman cul-

ture) expressed within Western painting in the competition between two types of perspective, one based on color, the other on line. Spengler opposes aerial perspective (which he associates with the Gothic north and the depiction of landscapes receding to the horizon) to linear perspective (which he identifies with the Renaissance south and the depiction of architectural structures, cityscapes, and interiors), and he sees Western painting's maturity as the resolution of this opposition in the triumph of aerial over linear perspective in the Baroque period.[3] Since Spengler considers aerial perspective to be a more important factor in the development of Western painting than linear, he concentrates his discussion on the former, in particular on the cultural significance of the transition from the Byzantine gold background, through the Gothic blue-green, naturalistic background, to the Baroque chiaroscuro and atelier-brown background.

Whatever the various subjects of individual Western paintings, Spengler maintains that the real subject (or metasubject) of Western painting as a whole is the recessive background, for it is in the treatment of the background that the "polyphonic, . . . infinity-seeking" spirit of Faustian culture expresses itself pictorially. According to Spengler, as perspectival depth-representation develops in Western painting, "the background as symbol of the infinite conquers the sense-perceptible foreground, and at last (herein lies the distinction between the depicting and the delineating styles) the depth-experience of the Faustian soul is captured in the kinesis of a picture" (1:239). As the "space-relief of Mantegna's plane layers dissolves in Tintoretto into directional energy" (1:239), there

> emerges in the picture the great symbol of an unlimited space-universe which comprises the individual things within itself as incidentals—the *horizon* . . . This line, in the unreal vapour of which heaven and earth melt, the sum and potent symbol of the far, contains the painter's version of the "infinitesmal" principle. It is out of the remoteness of this horizon that the *music* of the picture flows, and for this reason the great landscape-painters of Holland paint only backgrounds and atmospheres, just as for the contrary reason "anti-musical" masters like Signorelli and especially Mantegna, paint *only* foregrounds and "reliefs." It is in the horizon, then, that Music triumphs over Plastic, the *passion* of extension over its *substance*. (1:239)

Since "at a distance, space becomes time," the Faustian feeling for great distance "is at the same time one for history," and, in the pictorial representation of time as depth, "the horizon signifies the future" (1:241).[4]

The pictorial battle of "Space against Matter," of light-effects against delineated surfaces, of color tones against contours, that began in the blue-green horizon of Gothic painting, reached its "decisive close" in the "studio-brown" (Spengler 1:250) of Baroque painting. With the brown background, which dissolves "the tangible existences of the sense-world—the world of moments and foregrounds—into atmospheric semblances . . . , line disappears from the tone-picture" (1:250). Since that body-transcendent infinity that the Faustian spirit seeks is by its very nature without a definite visual image (being infinite it cannot be bounded by an outline), Spengler locates

the pictorial representation of infinity in the nonlinear component of visual art—color. And for Spengler, the quality that is shared by the infinity-evoking colors of Western art (horizon blue-green and studio-brown) is indefiniteness—which is to say that the imageless infinite is evoked as a chromatic blurring of the linear edges of the finite. Just as the color of the horizon in late Gothic and Renaissance painting is "an indefinite blue-green of a thousand nuances into white and grey and brown" (1:245), a veil of vaporous chromatic tones in which outlines dissolve, so the color of the characteristic studio interior in Baroque painting is an indefinite brown of endless tonal gradations, an uncertain half-light where "contours melt into chiaroscuro" (1:250). The brown background of Baroque painting brings infinity indoors, as it were, by dissolving interior walls not in light and air, not in the white vapor of the horizon, but in darkness, in the shadowy depths of an uncertain interior/exterior space.[5]

Since Spengler regards counterpoint as the crowning achievement of Faustian music, it is not surprising that he interprets the Faustian-musical qualities of oil painting as forms of visual counterpoint. Indeed, he finds this contrapuntal effect, which reaches its height in Baroque painting, present from the very beginning of Faustian visual art in the Gothic cathedral: "Counterpoint developed simultaneously with the flying-buttress system, and its source was the 'Romanesque' style of the Fauxbourdon and the Discant with their simple parallel and contrary motion" (1:229). This sense of counterpoint as a parallel and contrary motion might well be a description of Rogier van der Weyden's technique of making the historical timeline extending into a triptych's painted depth run in parallel but opposite directions—from background to foreground in one side panel and from foreground to background in the other. Certainly, for Spengler the whole sense of counterpoint is bound up with the notion of the irrevocable directedness of historical time, with the self-conscious (i.e., historical) awareness of time as being in constant flight. For what the techniques of Baroque pictorial counterpoint are meant to render is precisely "a unique and never-recurring instant," a "fleeting moment" of history.[6]

Playing on the derivation of "fugue" and "fugitive" from the same Latin root (*fuga* "flight"), Spengler remarks that it is "perspective that begins to awaken a premonition of something passing, fugitive and final" (1:241) in the nature-world of Faustian culture. Perspective conveys this fugitive or fugal sense of historical directedness, this sense of space as "living self-extension," by a contrapuntal (parallel and contrary) visual motion that corresponds to the parallel and contrary motion of historical self-awareness whereby, as Spengler says, "Western man lives in the *consciousness* of his becoming" by keeping "his eyes . . . constantly upon past and future" (1:264). Just as historical self-consciousness involves a Janus-like ability to look simultaneously in opposite temporal directions, so the perspectival vision of Western painting involves a looking forward toward the horizon (which signifies the future) in order to see backward, in order to perceive that sense of Destiny which the historical past represents for Faustian culture, that prescribed, irrevocable vector of the historical timeline whose forethrown

shadow is the imaginary line that runs from the observer's point of sight to the vanishing point on the horizon. This looking forward to see backward is a form of mirroring in which the Faustian self, by looking at what is apparently farthest from itself (that infinitely distant vanishing point on the horizon) sees what is closest to itself, sees its own truest image in that vaporous point that represents the craving for an endlessly dynamic, bodiless infinity. Since that point of infinite distance tends to be associated with the eye of God, with the presence of the Infinite Being to His Creation, the Faustian self sees revealed in that invisible mirroring eye the self's own godlike aspirations, its desire to treat the visible world as a function of each observer's unique point of view. Spengler says of this visual will-to-power that "the depth-perspective of oil-painting . . . makes the space-field of the picture, conceived as infinite, dependent on the observer, who in choosing his distance asserts his dominion . . . For centuries painting fought passionately to reach this symbol, which contains all that the words space, will and force are capable of indicating" (1:311). In this visual counterpoint the vector of sight that extends outward into the remote spatial depth of physical nature is harmonized with the parallel and contrary vector of insight that moves inward into the psychological depth of the farsighted, infinity-seeking, body-transcendent self of Faustian man.

For Spengler, as an intellectual descendant of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the Faustian soul's essence, as revealed by the Western conception of physical nature, is the will, the restless principle of historical "directional energy" (1:328).[7] Contending that at bottom there is "no distinction between space-as-depth and will," Spengler maintains that "the pure space of the Faustian world-picture is . . . efficient extension into the distance, as an overcoming of the merely sensuous, as a strain and tendency, as a spiritual will-to-power"—an "identity of space and will" that "comes to expression in the acts of Copernicus and Columbus" (1:310). Spengler repeatedly invokes Copernicus and Columbus as symbols of that Faustian visual/visionary will that created, in the depth-perspective of Western painting, a means of bringing remote distance under the observer's visual control as a prelude to an exploratory penetration of that distance to bring it under direct physical control. "From perspective," says Spengler, "there runs a road straight to the comprehension of our astronomical world-picture and its passionate pioneering into unending farness" (1:330). Thus our "infinity-wistfulness" led to the "characteristically Faustian discovery of the telescope which, penetrating into spaces hidden from the naked eye and inaccessible to the will-to-power, *widens* the universe that we possess" (1:330), while "the discoveries of Columbus and Vasco da Gama extended the geographical horizon without limit, and the world-sea came into the same relation with land as that of the universe of space with earth" (1:334).[8]

Spengler's sense of Columbus as a Faustian visionary undoubtedly influenced Crane's conception of the Great Navigator in "Ave Maria." Indeed, at one point Spengler likens the discovery of the New World to the visionary achievements of lyric poetry, noting that certain poetic passages reveal "whole worlds of experience and feeling" replicating "on a small

scale . . . the achievements of Copernicus and Columbus" (1:286)[9]—a comparison that Crane in effect repeats in *The Bridge* when he presents Walt Whitman (the visionary, poetic rediscoverer of the ideal, original America) as a Columbus figure.

In concluding his discussion of Western music and visual art, Spengler gives a brief summation that Crane might well have used as a synoptic epigraph for his epic. He says that if "we look at it all together—the expansion of the Copernican world-picture into that aspect of stellar space that we possess to-day; the development of Columbus's discovery into a worldwide command of the earth's surface by the West; the perspective of oil-painting and of tragedy-scene; the sublimed home-feeling; the passion of our Civilization for swift transit, the conquest of the air, the exploration of the Polar regions and the climbing of almost impossible mountain-peaks—we see, emerging everywhere the prime-symbol of the Faustian soul, Limitless Space. And those especially (in form, uniquely) Western creations of the soul-myth called 'Will,' 'Force' and 'Deed' must be regarded as derivatives of this prime-symbol" (1: 337). Relating this visual/spatial will-to-power to the founding spirit of America, he remarks, "Dramas like that of the emigration to America—man by man, each on his own account, driven by deep promptings to loneliness—or the Spanish Conquest, or the Californian gold-rush, dramas of uncontrollable longings for freedom, solitude, immense independence, and of giantlike contempt of all limitations whatsoever upon the home-feeling—these dramas are Faustian and only Faustian" (1:336).

§ 4
The Bridge and the Paintings in the Sistine Chapel; Moses and Jesus: Columbus and Whitman; Joseph Stella; El Greco's *Agony in the Garden*; the Grail; Dionysus and Jesus

At this point we can begin to appreciate the subtlety with which Crane has combined elements from the visionary pictorial tradition and Spengler's theories in structuring *The Bridge,* and we can also start to see the point of Crane's remark likening the interrelationship of *The Bridge*'s sections to that of the individual Sistine paintings. Just as the Sistine Chapel's interior represents the ordered gathering of the major images of Christianity within a single architectural space, so *The Bridge* is meant to be an ordered gathering of major images from American myth and history within a single poetic space, a space conceived in architectural terms. Further, the structure that governs the interrelationship of the Sistine paintings is (as with *The Bridge*) the prophetic vision of origins, with its attendant foreshadowings and foreshortenings. The ceiling of the chapel shows the origin of the universe and of man—the beginning of time—while the wall behind the altar shows the end of time, man's return to origin at the Last Judgement. The historical pathway between the two is evoked by the two series of paintings by Michelangelo's predecessors that run along the side

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walls. Facing the altar, we see on the left-hand wall six scenes from Moses's life, with a seventh scene on the entrance wall behind us; while on the right-hand wall, we see six scenes from Jesus's life, with a seventh on the other half of the entrance wall. The seven panels representing Moses's story are keyed to the seven representing Jesus's, to show how the central figure of the Old Law foreshadows the central figure of the New. Thus, for example, Botticelli's painting of the trials of Moses faces his painting of the temptations of Christ, Rosselli's panel showing Moses receiving the tables of the law (fig. 4.1) faces his panel showing Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and Signorelli's painting of the last days of Moses faces Rosselli's version of the Last Supper.

While the two series are linked by typological foreshadowing, the organization of the incidents within each depends upon both narrative and visual foreshortening. The horizontal relationship between the panels in each series involves a narrative or literary foreshortening that reduces the story of each life to seven tableaux, while the internal structure of most of the individual panels involves a visual foreshortening (in the service of a narrative foreshortening) whereby the artist arrays within the panel's painted depth a temporal sequence of events. Thus in Rosselli's painting of Moses and the ten commandments (see figure 4.1), Moses receives the tables of the law from God on the mountaintop (middle ground, center), breaks the tables in anger at the sight of the Hebrews worshipping the golden calf (center and right foreground), orders the Levites to punish the idolators (middle ground, right), and then redescends from the mountain with another set of tables (left foreground). The narrative foreshortening that governs the horizontal relationship between panels in each series is itself governed by the structure of foreshadowing that links the two series, for the specific scenes that make up the narrative sequence *within* each series were chosen on the basis of the prefigurative correlation *between* incidents in the two stories.

The analogy Crane draws between the structure of *The Bridge* and the interior of the Sistine Chapel refers at least in part to this technique of narrative foreshortening in the service of foreshadowing shared by the two works. Thus, for example, in his secular myth of America, Crane links Columbus and Walt Whitman in a relationship of prefiguration and fulfillment similar to that of the Sistine's Moses and Jesus. In this analogy with the central figures of the Old and New Laws, Columbus and Whitman are, respectively, the visionary discoverer of the geographic promised land (the New World) and the visionary revealer of the spiritual promised land (the new American consciousness, the Open Road). And indeed in his *Journal of the First Voyage* (which Crane read in January 1926 when he began work on "Ave Maria" [Weber, *Letters* 234]), Columbus likens himself to Moses at one point. In the entry for September 23, 1492, Columbus reports that the sea was becalmed and "the men began muttering, saying that as there was no heavy sea in that area, there would never be enough wind to return to Spain. But later the sea stirred a great deal and without wind, which surprised them; for which reason the Admiral says at this point: *So I had*

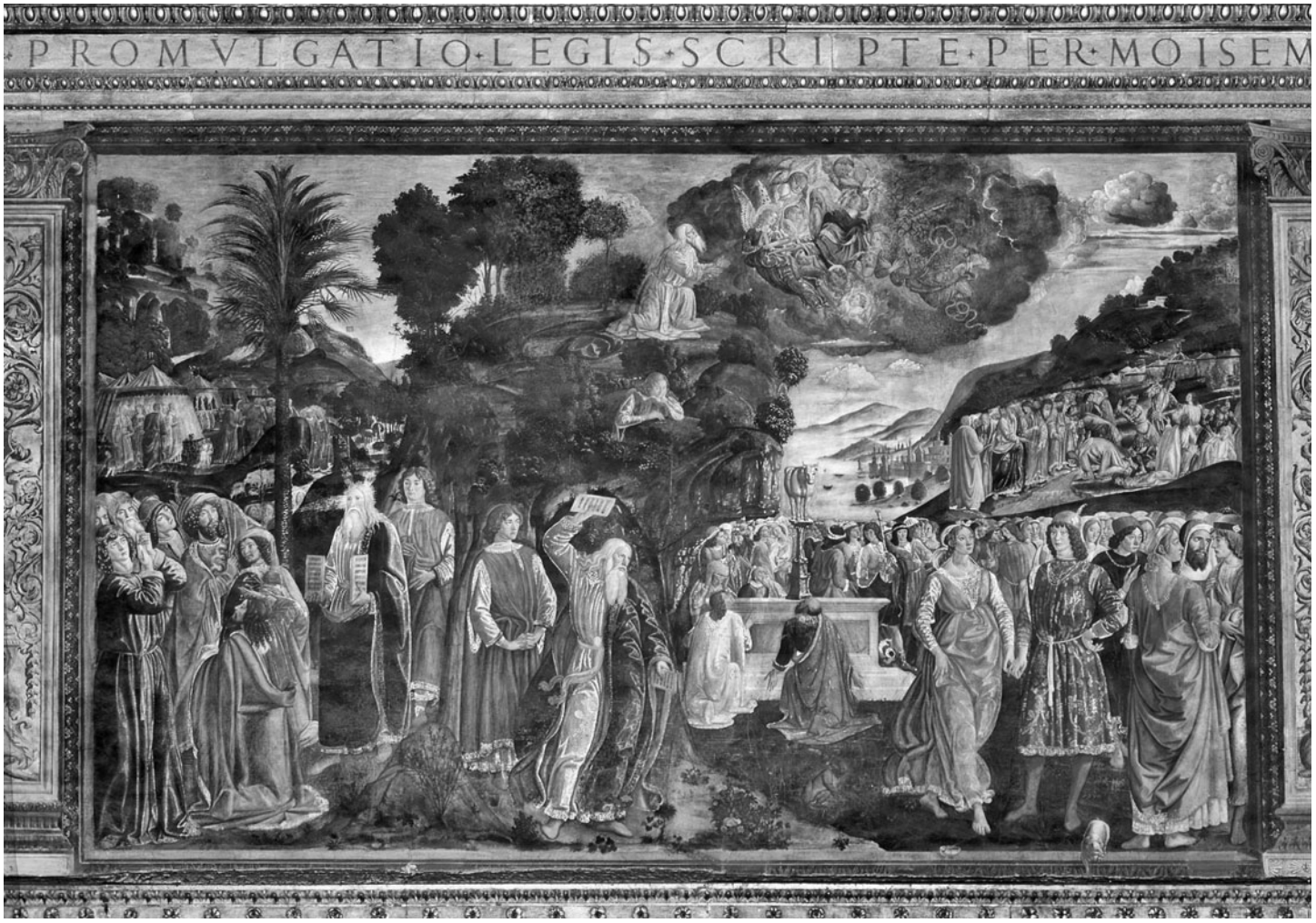

Figure 4.1. Cosimo Rosselli, *Moses on Mount Sinai and Adoration of the Golden Calf,* 1481–82. Fresco, 11 ft. 6 in. × 18 ft. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photograph by Scala/Art Resource, NY.

great need of that high sea the like of which has not been seen since the time of the Jews when they were leaving Egypt and murmured against Moses who was delivering them from captivity" (Columbus 17). Moreover, Whitman himself had treated Columbus as his visionary precursor in such poems as "Passage to India" and "Prayer of Columbus," establishing the precedent for Crane's treating Whitman as Crane's visionary precursor in "Cape Hatteras."[1] As the shade of Columbus rises before Whitman in "Passage to India" ("And who art thou sad shade? / Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary, / With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes, / Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world" [Whitman 292]), so the poetic quester in "Cape Hatteras" has a vision of Whitman that specifically evokes the far-sighted (visual) aspect of the poet's visionary power: he sees Whitman's "eyes, like the Great Navigator's without ship" (55), "Eyes tranquil with the blaze / Of love's own diametric gaze, of love's amaze!" (59).

In a letter to Allen Tate in March 1927, Crane describes Washington Roebling, the builder of the Brooklyn Bridge, as "a true Spenglerian hero" (Weber 293), an appellation that one can easily imagine Crane applying to Columbus, who discovered the land bridge between East and West, and to Whitman, who, in Crane's words, "stood up and flung the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!" (59). And indeed, Crane treats Columbus and Whitman as Spenglerian infinity seekers. Just before the poetic quester sees Whitman's visionary "eyes, like the Great Navigator's without ship," he says, "Walt, tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity / Be still the same as when you walked the beach / Near Paumanok—your lone patrol" (55). As a counterpoint to this image of Whitman walking the shore of the New World and gazing out into the infinite reaches of the sea, Columbus in "Ave Maria" is shown on board his ship staring at the distant horizon for the first physical glimpse of the land his visionary insight has already shown him: "biding the moon / Till dawn should clear that dim frontier, first seen / . . . Hearing the surf near / I, wonder-breathing, kept the watch,—saw / The first palm chevron the first lighted hill" (35). And on the return voyage Columbus is shown gazing into infinity as he watches "the waves, / Series on series, infinite, . . . enclose / This turning rondure whole" (36). (Note that Crane links Columbus to Whitman here through Columbus's use of the unmistakably Whitmanian word *rondure,* the very word Whitman uses in section 4 of "Passage to India" in celebrating the "struggles of many a captain" by which the "rondure of the world" is "at last accomplished" [Whitman 290].) Looking at the infinitely expanding circle of the horizon, Columbus can almost see the Infinite Being who created the universe—that Being whom medieval theologians imaged as an intelligible sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere—can almost see Him in "this disposition" that "thy night relates / From Moon to Saturn in one sapphire wheel: / The orbic wake of thy once whirling feet" (37).

Significantly, Columbus, in imaging the God he sees in nature, emphasizes the visionary power of that infinite watcher whose eye has been on him throughout the voyage. The God to whom Columbus prays is repre-

sented as a ubiquitous observer whose "primal scan" (37) encompasses the universe. Whereas our field of vision at any given moment is only an arc of a circle, His field of vision at every moment is a sphere. Thus, in "Ave Maria" a gazer into infinity (Columbus) has a vision of an infinite gazer (God) looking back at him, the same kind of mirroring of the observer's point of sight by the vanishing point in linear perspective or the palest point of the horizon in aerial perspective (symbols of God's invisible eye) that we noted earlier, a mirroring that reveals the godlike aspirations of the Faustian craving for infinity. Emerson, one of Crane's abiding influences, described this same phenomenon in *Nature*: "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God" (Emerson 1:10).

We should note in this connection that in his 1927 letter to Otto Kahn, Crane describes the passing of the American Indian and his world in terms reminiscent of the transformation that occurred in Western painting when, as the Byzantine gold background was replaced by the naturalistic blue-green horizon, the traditional image of God the Father aloft on the gold ground was transformed into that palest point on the horizon representing the invisible eye of God. Crane says that the ending of "The Dance" (the immolation of the chieftain Maquokeeta) shows "the extinction of the Indian, who finally, after being assumed into the elements of nature (as he understood them) persists only as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or as a star that hangs between day and night—'the twilight's dim perpetual throne'" (556). This eye in the sky (the morning/evening star) reappears at key moments in *The Bridge,* as, for example, at the end of "Harbor Dawn" where the poetic quester awakens from his dream of union with the unknown woman he will later call Pocahontas. Since the star is Pocahontas's transformed Indian lover Maquokeeta, its appearance here suggests the godlike aspiration concealed in the quester's desire to be united with the Indian maiden, which is to say, his desire (achieved in "The Dance") to imaginatively identify himself with Maquokeeta (who enacts the role of the sky god) as he weds in a rainstorm Pocahontas (in her role as the earth goddess). This same star returns in the last stanza of the concluding "Atlantis" section where Crane, in apostrophizing it as "one tolling star / That bleeds infinity" (71), makes explicit its significance as a symbol of that Faustian craving for infinity that runs through the entire poem.[2]

Perhaps Crane's most complex and sustained use of Spengler's theories in linking Columbus and Whitman as the visionary discoverers of the physical and spiritual New Worlds occurs in his identification of the Bridge with aerial flight and ocean voyaging, on the one hand, and with a physical and a visionary-historical counterpoint on the other. The joining of these motifs is present in the very first stanzas of the proem "To Brooklyn Bridge." Since Brooklyn Bridge crosses the waters of the East River by soaring into the air above them, Crane associates it with both the wings of a bird ("*How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest / The seagull's wings*

shall dip and pivot him, / Shedding white rings of tumult, building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty—" [33]) and the sails of a ship ("*Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes / As apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures to be filed away; / —Till elevators drop us from our day . . .* " [33])—a linking of the images of wing and sail that is repeated in "Ave Maria" when Columbus's ships, dropping anchor on the shores of the American land bridge, are greeted by the natives as "The Great White Birds!" (35). Flight is, of course, one of the works traditionally associated with the legendary Faust's alchemical science and its aspiration to a godlike knowledge-as-power. Pointing out that Columbus's geographic discoveries and Leonardo's contemporaneous artistic and scientific discoveries "have a deep affinity" in that "they signify the victory of the infinite over the material limitedness of the tangibly present," Spengler links the painter's vision, the explorer's vision, and the image of Faustian flight in a single passage:

> Leonardo was a discoverer through-and-through, and discovery was the sum in one word of his whole nature. Brush, chisel, dissecting-knife, pencil for calculating and compasses for drawing—all were for him of equal importance. They were for him what the Mariner's Compass was for Columbus . . . Leonardo, in his red-chalk sketches and his backgrounds reveals aerial secrets with every line. He was the first, too, who set his mind to work on aviation. To fly, to free one's self from earth, to lose one's self in the expanse of the universe—is not this ambition Faustian in the highest degree? Is it not in fact the fulfillment of our dreams? Has it never been observed how the Christian legend became in Western painting a glorious transfiguration of this motive? All the pictured ascents into heaven and falls into hell, the divine figures floating above the clouds, the blissful detachment of angels and saints, the insistent emphasis upon freedom from earth's heaviness, are emblems of soul-flight, peculiar to the art of the Faustian. (1:278–79)

In line with the prefigurative relationship between Columbus and Whitman, the images of wing and sail (of Faustian flight) associated with Columbus's discovery of the American land bridge are subsequently applied in "Cape Hatteras" to Whitman's discovery of the American higher consciousness, in as much as it was Whitman, Crane says, who "flung the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth" (59). Thus the vision of the sailing ships that ends "Cutty Sark" leads into the "Cape Hatteras" section with its epigraph from Whitman's "Passage to India" and its opening image of a sailor returning home from a round-the-world voyage across seas so thoroughly explored and mapped that they no longer present the possibility of Faustian infinity seeking. And this passage leads in turn into Crane's roaring paean to the airplane (the new means of exploration) and its pilot who has there in his "wrist a Sanskrit charge / To conjugate infinity's dim marge— / Anew . . . !" (57). The image of the "Sanskrit charge" and Crane's later reference to Whitman as "Vedic Caesar" (59) are allusions to the ending of "Passage to India," where Whitman makes it clear that the passage he seeks is not simply to a physical place but to a state of spiritual enlightenment: "Passage to more than India! / Are thy wings plumed in-

deed for such far flights? . . . / Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas? / Then have thy bent unleash'd . . . // O my brave soul! / O farther farther sail!" (Whitman 294). In this same vein Crane, at the end of "Cape Hatteras," evokes the airplane's flight and the exploration of aerial space as an unceasing Faustian "soul flight" into those realms of higher consciousness that Whitman's poetic vision revealed: "And now, as launched in abysmal cupolas of space, / Toward endless terminals, Easters of speeding light— / Vast engines outward veering with seraphic grace / On clarion cylinders pass out of sight / To course that span of consciousness thou'st named / The Open Road—thy vision is reclaimed!" (59–60).

In linking Whitman's visionary poetry to the image of the airplane, Crane may also have been influenced by the work of the Italian-American futurist painter Joseph Stella. In a letter to Stella from January 1929, Crane says that a mutual friend, Charmion von Wiegand, had shown him a copy of Stella's "privately issued monograph called 'New York'" containing Stella's "essay on Brooklyn Bridge" and his "marvelous paintings . . . not only of the Bridge but other New York subjects" (605). Crane asks Stella to let his friend, the editor Eugene Jolas, reprint the essay (along with reproductions of three paintings—"The Bridge," "The Port," and "The Skyscrapers") in his magazine *transition,* and he asks permission to use Stella's "painting of the Bridge as a frontispiece to a long poem I have been busy on for the last three years—called *The Bridge*": "It is a remarkable coincidence that I should, years later, have discovered that another person, by whom I mean you, should have had the same sentiments regarding Brooklyn Bridge which inspired the main theme and pattern of my poem" (606). The Stella paintings Crane mentions are three of the five panels in a polyptych entitled *New York Interpreted* (1920–22) in the Newark Museum, while the essay he refers to, Stella's "The Brooklyn Bridge (A page of my life)," was subsequently published in the June 1929 issue of *transition* as a result of Crane's efforts.

As Spengler associates the infinity-seeking discoveries of Leonardo and Columbus with the image of aviation considered as Faustian soul-flight, so Stella in his essay on Brooklyn Bridge connects Whitman's visionary poetry with the image of the airplane, an association made within the context of Stella's own attempts to discover a new chromatic language in *his* visual art which he compares to the sails of a ship voyaging into the blue distance:

> With anxiety I began to unfold all the poignant deep resonant colors, in quest of the chromatic language that would be the exact eloquence of steely architectures . . . Meanwhile the verse of Walt Whitman—soaring above as a white aeroplane of Help—was leading the sails of my Art through the blue vastity of Phantasy, while the fluid telegraph wires, trembling around, as if expecting to propagate a new musical message, like aerial guides—leading to Immensity, were keeping me awake with the insatiable thirst for new adventures.
>
> I seized the object into which I could unburden all the knowledge springing from my present experience—"THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE." (87)

Stella's further linking of a musical image—the telegraph wires trembling with "a new musical message, like aerial guides"—to those of wing and sail (associated, respectively, with Whitman's poetry and his own painting) reminds us of that other set of images Crane joins to the figures of wing and sail in the opening stanzas of "To Brooklyn Bridge," images of an architectural and a visionary-historical counterpoint.

§ 5
Counterpoint in *The Bridge*

Recall that Spengler associated the development of counterpoint with the contemporaneous development of the flying buttress system. He describes counterpoint as "an architecture of human voices" (1:229) in which the balancing of "parallel and contrary motions" (1:229) creates the dynamic equilibrium of the musical work; in much the same way, in the flying buttress system, weights and stresses (vertical and horizontal force vectors) are balanced against each other to create the Gothic cathedral (whose space contains this contrapuntal music). Crane associates the notion of counterpoint with both the real Brooklyn Bridge and the symbolic bridge created in his poem. He understood the essence of the real bridge as a dynamic equilibrium of counterbalanced forces (flexibility and strength, freedom and restraint) that allowed the structure to absorb stresses of weight and wind into its dynamic system without collapsing. And indeed, the bridge's architect, John Roebling, seems to have held a roughly similar notion of the suspension bridge's contrapuntal design. As Alan Trachtenberg has noted, Roebling had been a student of Hegel's at the University of Berlin ("according to family legend . . . his favorite student" [42]), and his Hegelian training apparently influenced his decision to immigrate to America and achieve "self-realization" in working out his destiny against the New World's limitless horizons. Roebling's Hegelianism also seems to have found material expression in manipulating the suspension bridge's dialectic of opposing forces—vertical compression in the stone towers (thesis) balanced against horizontal tension in the steel cables (antithesis) to produce suspension (synthesis) as the bridge, in a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung,* was raised up, soaring above the water and uniting the shores. Given a Hegelian influence on Spengler's notion of the contrapuntal (in all its manifestations), we can see the intellectual genealogy that lies behind Crane's description of John Roebling's son, Washington, the actual builder of the bridge, as "a true Spenglerian hero."

In the poem's opening section "To Brooklyn Bridge," Crane evokes this physical counterpoint of freedom and restraint through the image of the "*inviolate curve*" of the seagull's flight which, like the curve of the bridge, builds "*high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty*" (33). And he describes the bridge's strength through flexibility as "*Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,— / Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!*" (33).

Stella's further linking of a musical image—the telegraph wires trembling with "a new musical message, like aerial guides"—to those of wing and sail (associated, respectively, with Whitman's poetry and his own painting) reminds us of that other set of images Crane joins to the figures of wing and sail in the opening stanzas of "To Brooklyn Bridge," images of an architectural and a visionary-historical counterpoint.

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Crane also associates the symbolic bridge created by the poem with a visionary-historical counterpoint, which is to say, a contrapuntal narrative structure whose pictorial basis is a visual structure in which we look back into the past to see the future. We do so by looking in front of us at the forethrown shadow or reflected image of something which, in this circular time system, lies behind us (in the direction of the past) but, paradoxically, is coming to meet us from in front (the direction of the future) along a circular pathway. What we experience in this process is the parallel and contrary motion involved in looking simultaneously in opposite temporal directions.

In a letter to Waldo Frank from July 1926, Crane gives us a clue to his understanding of the way this visual counterpoint operates in the poem. He points out that the "construction" of "To Brooklyn Bridge" "parallels the peculiar technique of *space and detail division* used by El Greco in several canvases—notably the *Christus am Olberg*? I've just been struck by that while casually returning to my little monograph as I often do" (474). We can judge the intellectual context in which Crane made this comparison of pictorial and poetic structures from his closing remark in the letter that he (Crane) had sent Frank a copy of *The Decline of the West* by registered mail two weeks earlier. This monograph on El Greco was a book that, according to Philip Horton, Crane "carried with him wherever he went" (111). In 1928 when Crane was visiting London, he reported to Frank that he had seen at "the National Gallery . . . the marvelous 'Agony in the Garden' of El Greco" (605). El Greco created two different compositions for the *Agony in the Garden* (Wethey 2:28–29), or the *Christus am Olberg,* as Crane calls it in the 1926 letter. The painting Crane saw in London belongs to the earlier of the two composition types (c. 1590–95), the finest example of which is the version in the Toledo Museum in Crane's home state of Ohio, and it is undoubtedly this earlier type to which Crane refers in the 1926 letter.

El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* (fig. 5.1) shows the moment when Christ, praying on the Mount of Olives with the apostles Peter, James, and John, implores His Father, "Let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:36–45). In the foreground of the painting we see Christ looking up toward an angel holding the cup. In the middle ground, at lower left, the three apostles are shown sleeping in a grotto, while in the background, at lower right, a group of soldiers with lances and torches, led by a robed figure, approach along a road. The painting's compositional structure is one already familiar from the central panel of Rogier van der Weyden's altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments. There the priest, with his back turned to us at the main altar in the background, looks in front of him at the elevated Eucharist and sees in the round mirror-like wafer a reflected image, as it were, of Christ's body behind him, elevated on the cross in the foreground of the painting. In El Greco's painting, Christ, facing us, gazes at the cup that, on the one hand, evokes His institution of the sacrifice of the Mass at the Last Supper and, on the other, symbolizes his coming passion and death, his consummation of that sacrifice on the cross. And while Christ is looking at the vision-

Figure 5.1. El Greco, *The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane,* ca. 1590–95. Oil on canvas, 40¼ × 44¾ in. National Gallery, London, Great Britain. Copyright National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.

ary cup that symbolizes his future suffering and death, that future—in the form of the soldiers approaching along the road at his back—is already coming to meet him from behind.

But how does the compositional structure of El Greco's painting, its "space and detail division," parallel, as Crane contends, the structure of "To Brooklyn Bridge"? The answer is to be found in the poem's third and fourth stanzas. In the first stanza Crane associates the freedom of the seagull's flight with the bridge; then in the second, as the seagull vanishes from sight into the distance, he compares this image of the absolute freedom of flight to those daydreams of freedom common to office workers cooped up in buildings. In the third stanza Crane moves from this image to an evocation of the principal cultural medium by which twentieth-century Americans are given their visions of national history and myth, given the images out of which their daydreams of freedom are constructed—the movies: "*I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights / With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene / Never disclosed, but hastened to again, / Foretold to other eyes on the same screen*" (33).

As opposed to that panoramic state in which one sees the future by looking into the past (the state Crane associates with visionary poetry), the cinema is a panoramic sleight, a trick-show that promises a visionary revelation but that never discloses what it seems constantly to foretell. The situation of the "*multitudes bent toward some flashing scene*" in the movie theater, the masses sitting in darkness looking at shadow images projected from a source of light above and behind them onto a screen in front, is undoubtedly meant to remind us of Plato's allegory of the cave and the situation of those who sit in the cavern's darkness looking at the shadows cast on the wall in front of them by the fire-illuminated objects behind them. The configuration of Plato's cave allegory represents the classic solution to the problem of imaging (i.e., of literalizing) the notion of foreshadowing, which is to say, the problem of how one is able to see the shadow of an object either without being able or before being able to see the object itself, so that the appearance of the shadow must always precede (and thus foreshadow) the appearance of the object that casts it.

In stanza 4, Crane opposes to the panoramic sleights of the cinema the image of the bridge in the dawn light: "*And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced / As though the sun took step of thee*." The third and fourth stanzas, then, consist of a single sentence whose syntactic structure, excluding the qualifying clauses, is "*I think of cinemas . . . And Thee . . .*" This conjunctive structure suggests that the opposition Crane draws between the panoramic state of visionary consciousness symbolized by the bridge's dawn-illuminated arc and the panoramic sleights of the cinema's illuminated shadow images is based on a formal similarity between bridge and cinema that prompts their pairing as symbols of true and false vision. And I would suggest that the formal similarity between the two amounts to this: that just as the people in the movie theater gaze in front of them at illuminated shadow images projected from a light source behind their backs, so the poetic quester looks in front of him at the dawn-illuminated bridge whose bright arc is the shadow image of the encompassing circle of visionary consciousness whose unseen arc is behind him. Moreover, since the poetic quester begins his day in Brooklyn, he must, in order to see the dawn-illuminated Brooklyn Bridge, be looking toward the west with the rising sun at his back, a configuration that recalls one of the more Platonic passages in Emerson's *Nature.* The natural world, says Emerson, "is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin. It always speaks of Spirit. It suggests the absolute . . . It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us" (Emerson 1:61).[1]

That the illuminated arc of the bridge is, for all its brightness, simply a Platonic shadow of the visionary light is made clear in the ninth and tenth stanzas of "To Brooklyn Bridge." Having observed the bridge through the course or semicircle of the day in the first eight stanzas, the poetic quester, in the ninth stanza, sees the bridge enter the semicircle of the night and change from an illuminated to an illuminating arc as "*the traffic lights*" beading its path create a visual image that seems to "*condense eternity*" (34). The illuminating arc of the bridge at night reveals the figurative status of its

illuminated arc in daylight, for it evokes that unseen portion of the encompassing circle of visionary consciousness that curves behind the quester's back as he looks at the bridge in daylight, the unseen arc behind which, with the visible arc in front (the arc of physical sight), evokes the visionary circle associated with the sun's disk. Seeing how the visible arc in front is part of, and thus foreshadows, the ideal unseen circle at his back, the poetic quester says to the bridge, "*Only in darkness is thy shadow clear*" (34), which is to say, only then is its status as a Platonic shadow image clarified. "To Brooklyn Bridge" ends with the quester looking at the bridge at night and waiting for the inevitable return of dawn, the dawn that returns repeatedly throughout *The Bridge* at moments of visionary illumination.[2]

It should now be clearer how the poetic structure of "To Brooklyn Bridge" parallels the pictorial structure of El Greco's *Agony in the Garden.* In the former instance, the quester, by associating the Bridge with a cinematic projection of images from behind him reminiscent of Plato's cave, sees the arc of the bridge as a Platonic shadow image of the visionary illuminating circle at his back; in the latter instance, Christ looks at a visionary object in front of him that foreshadows the future that is already approaching him from behind, which is to say, foreshadows the circular path of time that will bring him face to face with these events. In El Greco's painting the only natural source of illumination shown, the circle of the full moon, is behind Christ's back, while an unseen, presumably supernatural light source is located above the angel with the visionary cup. As the bridge at dawn is an arc illuminated by the sun rising at the quester's back and the bridge at night an arc illuminating the darkness with its strands of electric lights (an artificial light that is a shadowy figure of the natural light of the sun), so in El Greco's painting the full moon behind Christ's back is at once an object illuminated by the light of the unseen sun and an object illuminating the darkness by means of this reflected light (the equivalent of the bridge's artificial illumination). The painting evokes the moon's dual status as illuminated/illuminating object by using a thin veil of clouds to divide it so that part is shaded and part is a bright arc. Christ's orientation in this night scene, with his back to the illuminated/illuminating object and his face to the angel with the cup and the supernatural light from heaven, reverses that of the quester who at dawn faces the illuminated/illuminating object and has his back to the ultimate source of natural light, the sun. This reverse orientation reflects the fact that while Christ in his human nature enacts a drama of foreshadowing (i.e., of prefiguration and fulfillment), Christ through his divine nature already knows the future. He looks toward that supernal light (which, ever since Plato's allegory of the cave, has been synonymous with the highest good and an ultimate visionary illumination) precisely because, as the beginning of John's Gospel explains, he *is* that Light. Because of his dual nature as man and God, Christ is at once the quester, the quest, and the goal of the quest, that goal whose earthly symbol through centuries of Western literature was the cup at which he gazes in the painting, the Grail. In a 1926 letter to Yvor Winters, Crane

points out that in "Cutty Sark" "the rather 'grailish' Atlantis-Rose theme" serves "as a kind of fugue counterpoint" and that the ending of "Cutty Sark," the quester's vision of the nineteenth-century sailing ships, is "pure calligrame" (Parkinson 14), the term that, as we noted, the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire used for the type of poem whose shape on the page is visually expressive of its subject. That Crane characterizes the "Atlantis-Rose theme" as "grailish" in the specific context of "Cutty Sark" is significant for several reasons. The *Cutty Sark* was a famous nineteenth-century clipper ship, a Scottish vessel originally launched in 1869. After years of service in the China tea and Australian wool trades, a change of name, and being dismasted in a storm, it was restored and renamed *Cutty Sark* in 1922 in England. But "Cutty Sark" was also a brand of Scotch whiskey made for export, its name meant to take advantage of the publicity surrounding the ship's restoration; it was introduced in 1923, the same year that Crane began work on *The Bridge* and three years before he wrote the "Cutty Sark" section. It apparently became Crane's favorite brand of Scotch. (Because Prohibition was in effect in the United States in the 1920s, Cutty Sark whiskey was exported from England to Canada and to Nassau in the Bahamas. As we noted earlier, most of the sections of *The Bridge,* including "Cutty Sark," were written during the summer of 1926 on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, a short boat trip from Nassau. Moreover, by the mid-1920s the whiskey was available in most New York speakeasies.) The name, then, in Crane's poem evokes, on the one hand, sailing ships and Western voyages to the Orient like those celebrated in Whitman's "Passage to India" and, on the other, alcoholic spirits as a means of heightening consciousness, a recurring motif in Crane's poetry usually associated with a state of Dionysian (Bacchic) enlightenment.

Thus, for example, in the poem "Lachrymae Christi" from *White Buildings* (1926), Crane conflates the images of Christ and Dionysus as dying and reviving gods, as wine gods whose revivification personifies the natural world's power to renew itself in the spring through the season's invigorating warmth and moisture. The title "Lachrymae Christi" ("tears of Christ") is the name of a sweet wine from southern Italy, and the restorative powers of spring rain, of wine, and of the tears of a god (i.e., his suffering and death so as to give mankind spiritual life after death) are mingled in the poem's image of a "sentient cloud / Of tears" that "flocks through the tendoned loam," bringing the body of earth to life:

> And as the nights
> Strike from Thee perfect spheres,
> Lift up in lilac-emerald breath *the grail*
> *Of earth* again—
>
> Thy face
> From charred and riven stakes, O
> Dionysus, Thy
> Unmangled target smile. (15, italics mine)

The image of "charred and riven stakes" out of which Dionysus's face emerges combines in a single figure the stakes that prop the grapevines and the fire that destroyed the dwelling of Dionysus's mother Semele when his father Zeus appeared at Semele's request in his true form as lightning, an epiphany that killed Semele, caused Dionysus's premature birth, and required Zeus to shelter the infant in his thigh until he was reborn later. One of Crane's favorite authors, Walter Pater, in describing "the double birth of the vine god" in *Greek Studies* (7:25), "his birth, first of fire, and afterwards of dew; . . . his victory over two enemies, the capricious, excessive heats and colds of spring" (26), calls Dionysus "the *spiritual form* of fire and dew" (23)—the wine god, born of the lightning and the spring moisture, who distills his spiritual essence in a fiery, enlightening liquid. Crane's image of "perfect spheres" that the night strikes from the body of earth in a "lilac-emerald breath" suggests not only the drops of dew that form at night but also "the pale globes" (to use Pater's phrase) of the grapes that the dew nurtures, as well as the drops of wine fermented from those grapes (a wine named for a god who transformed wine into his own blood in the grail) and perhaps even the earth's rotation and orbit, the basis of the seasonal cycle of death and rebirth in nature. The poem's opening and closing images (Christ's tears and Dionysus's smile) are an allusion to Nietzsche's version of the Dionysian *sparagmos* in *The Birth of Tragedy.* Describing the vegetative god's dismemberment and seminal scattering ("the properly Dionysian *suffering*") as being "like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire" that teaches us "to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering," Nietzsche imagines the offspring of this insemination: "From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man" (73). The Dionysian intoxication produced by wine overcomes the suffering of individuation, dissolves the sense of personal isolation, in a godlike awareness of what Nietzsche calls elsewhere in the work "Dionysian universality" (103), a visionary glimpse of "the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and despite all annihilation" (104). In "The Wine Menagerie," another poem from *White Buildings,* Crane images this transcendence of bodily limits and isolated personality as a flight into unexplored regions of consciousness, a voyage through tears of human sympathy to the smile of divine communion, the "unmangled target smile" of Dionysus: "New thresholds, new anatomies! Wine talons / Build freedom up about me and distill / This competence—to travel in a tear / Sparkling alone, within another's will. // Until my blood dreams a receptive smile / Wherein new purities are snared" (17).

From "Lachrymae Christi" and "The Wine Menagerie," we get some sense of the chain of associations that for Crane links the dual reference of Cutty Sark (sailing ship and liquor) to the image of the grail (considered as an archetypal visionary quest-object), the chain of associations underlying Crane's description of the poetic quester's visionary goal (evoked by the Atlantis-Rose theme) as "grailish." This dual reference of the name *Cutty Sark* is reflected in turn in the bipartite structure of the "Cutty Sark" section. Its first part is made up of the fragmentary reminiscences of an old

sailor who has spent the night drinking with the poetic quester in a South Street dive—reminiscences of his voyages to strange lands that are interwoven with a song played by a pianola, its lyrics evoking the "Atlantis-Rose theme" as "a kind of fugue counterpoint." The second part is the vision of the nineteenth-century clipper ships that occurs when the quester, leaving the bar at dawn, walks to the middle of the Brooklyn Bridge and suddenly has a glimpse of the famous sailing vessels of a bygone era passing as if in review, midmost among them the "Perennial-*Cutty*-trophied-*Sark*!" (53). Clearly, this visionary moment results in part from the quester's lingering intoxication, which has given him the power "to travel in a tear / Sparkling alone within another's will," which is to say, to enter so wholly into the consciousness of the old sailor whose reminiscences he has shared that he can actually see the lost world of sail the old man once inhabited.

This visionary glimpse of a lost world of nineteenth-century voyaging, like the other visionary glimpses of moments in the American past that occur throughout the poem, is a foreshadowing of that final "vision" of an apotheosized, once-and-future bridge in "Atlantis," the image of the bridge as a visionary quest-object linked to the idealized world of American origins and its higher consciousness in much the same way that that other visionary quest-object, the grail, is linked to heaven and the beatific vision. And since what fuels the quester's visionary powers is Dionysian intoxication, it is only natural that the imagery of the grail (a cup in which wine, transformed into the blood of a god, is a means of divine communion leading to an ultimate vision in heaven) became attached in Crane's mind to the symbol of the bridge and to the "Atlantis-Rose theme" of an ultimate return to origins, the Rose being, of course, a reference to Dante's figuration of the beatific vision at the end of *The Divine Comedy*.

Read in the context of this grail symbolism, Crane's comparison of the structure of "To Brooklyn Bridge" to that of El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* sheds light as well on the analogy he draws between the structure of *The Bridge* and the arrangement of the Sistine paintings, in that one of the Sistine panels in the life of Jesus has the same pictorial structure as El Greco's *Agony in the Garden*. In Cosimo Rosselli's painting of the Last Supper (fig. 5.2), Jesus and eleven of the apostles are seated around a semicircular table facing the viewer, while Judas, with a small devil perched on his shoulder, sits on the opposite side of the table with his back to us and his face shown in profile. In the background above and behind Jesus, as if beyond a sort of loggia, are three scenes whose sequence runs left to right—the Agony in the Garden, the Arrest of Jesus, and the Crucifixion. The scenes are visible to Judas the betrayer but hidden from Jesus and the apostles. On the table in front of Jesus is the cup symbolizing the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the upper left-hand panel the angel holds out to Jesus the cup symbolizing the sacrifice of the cross. Just as the three future moments depicted on the rear wall are behind Jesus's back, so in the upper left-hand panel, where he faces toward the left to look at the visionary cup, the two future events depicted in the center and right-hand panels are again at his back. This series of three small panels within the painted depth of a larger panel that is itself

Figure 5.2. Cosimo Rosselli, *The Last Supper,* 1481–82. Fresco, 11 ft. 6 in. × 18 ft. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photograph by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

one of the series depicting Jesus's life presents the viewer with a subtle commentary on the arrangement of the paintings that surround him in the Chapel; at the same time it presents us with a model of the relationship between the structure of the opening section "To Brooklyn Bridge" and that of *The Bridge* as a whole.

The sequential vector of the three small panels runs horizontally from left to right, as does that of the seven panels in Jesus's story; whereas the sequence of the panels in Moses's story on the opposite wall runs from right to left. (It is clearly part of the chapel's overall design that one reads the panels depicting the central figure of the New Testament in the same left-to-right direction used to read the language in which it was written, while one reads the panels depicting the central figure of the Old Testament by moving in the right-to-left direction used to read the language in which it was written.) The sequential vectors in the two series of seven large panels and in the series of three small panels within Rosselli's *Last Supper* all run in the same direction—away from the painting of the Last Judgement behind the main altar, toward the rear wall where the two series of large panels meet. If a viewer placed himself with his back to the main altar, he would be looking in the same direction as the sequential vectors of all three series of panels, that is, along the timeline running from earlier to later, and into a kind of rectilinear U-shaped arrangement of paintings. So positioned, the viewer, looking from earlier to later episodes, sees, as it were, a figuration of temporal futurity, and yet the ultimate future of time itself, time's end in its return to eternity depicted in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement,* is unseen on the wall behind him.

The ultimate future, hidden behind the viewer's back, is a return to that farthest moment in the past before time began, the moment depicted on the ceiling above the viewer's head. The paintings at the viewer's back and above his head suggest the eternal origin's immanence and transcendence, the way that eternity both closes the circle of time and yet is above that circle. As the viewer stands looking along the side walls' parallel vectors into the sequential future of those two lives, yet aware that the ultimate future of time itself is behind him, he experiences time's circularity as a form of counterpoint, a simultaneous forward and backward motion of sight and insight. This same pictorial counterpoint structures the prophetic vision of origins in *The Bridge* as a simultaneous forward and backward motion of foreshadowing and foreshortening, as that parallel and contrary interplay that occurs when the forethrown shadow of an ideal original America falls across (and in so doing, delineates and organizes) the symbolic moments of a foreshortened national history. This forward and backward movement in *The Bridge*'s narrative structure is the literary counterpart, in Crane's words, of that "marvellous feeling . . . of a simultaneous forward and upward motion" that the "webbed cables" of Brooklyn Bridge give as one walks across it (539).

§ 6
Foreshadowing and Lateral Foreshadowing; the Grail Quest; Eliot's *The Waste Land*

The forward and backward movement within the poem's narrative sequence—from sections set in the quester's twentieth century to sections set variously in the pre-Columbian world of the Indians, the fifteenth-century world of Columbus, and the nineteenth century of the pioneers, the gold rush, and the clipper ships—is experienced by the reader as part of a circular journey that runs from the opening section ("To Brooklyn Bridge") to the closing section ("Atlantis"), circular because these two sections are essentially the same in subject and structure, thereby making the poem's ending a return to, a repetition of, its beginning.

In the opening and closing sections, the quester in effect gazes at the bridge; in the former, it is the structure as seen at various hours of the day from dawn to night, while in the latter it is a symbolic structure as seen from night to dawn to night—the bridge transfigured into a visionary quest-object bearing the accumulated weight of associations from American myth and history. In both sections Crane creates the bridge in words through an act of Adamic, generative naming. In "To Brooklyn Bridge" the sense of these descriptive epithets is often unclear. But this initial shadowy evocation of the bridge's symbolic status is clarified as the poem's subsequent sections create the contexts that elucidate these names, a process culminating in "Atlantis," where most of the images applied to the bridge in the opening section are repeated (along with others whose connotations have been established along the way).

In the poem's final section, the quester (who in the opening section has initially crossed the bridge in the morning from Brooklyn to Manhattan and then returned on the subway under the river at night in "The Tunnel") stands once again in Brooklyn contemplating the bridge as night fades into dawn. The quester's circular journey—from Brooklyn (east) to Manhattan (west) and back to Brooklyn (east)—duplicates the direction of Columbus's voyage from the Old World to the New and back to the Old, as well as that of the quester's imaginative journey from the East coast to the Midwest and back to the East as he goes in search of the American past. Just as the quester's journey returns to its starting point, so the reader's movement through the poem returns to *its* starting point in the visionary naming that constitutes the closing "Atlantis" section. As the image of the bridge moves from a shadowy figuration at the beginning to an illuminating transfiguration at the end, so the reader moves from a state of initial puzzlement over a description that seems to give the architectural structure more symbolic weight than it can bear, to a final understanding of the complex image of "bridgeship" as a figure of the American experience. The reader finds that his own trajectory through the poem parallels that of the quester, since for both the visionary goal is, within the poem's narrative sequence, at once ahead and behind, the goal being essentially a repetition of the initial situ-

ation but with the object of contemplation now transfigured and the contemplator enlightened.

It is not surprising that Crane associates this scenario (i.e., an obscure initial glimpse of a symbolic object, a circular quest, and an enlightened return to the object) with the Grail motif. In one of the standard forms of the medieval quest story, a youthful knight, coming upon the Grail castle early in his quest, observes in the presence of an ailing ruler (the Fisher King) the sacred symbols of the cup and bleeding lance yet fails, because of ignorance, diffidence, or an excess of courtesy, to ask what the Grail is and whom it serves. He thus causes the castle to vanish overnight, and the young knight is condemned to arduous years of questing before he once again finds the castle and its ailing ruler and, now understanding the object's significance, asks the right questions. Small wonder, then, that Crane, in a December 1927 letter to Yvor Winters, described Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* as an "especially interesting" work "revealing to me my unconscious use in *The Bridge* of a number of time-honored symbols" (563). Crane knew of Weston's book from Eliot's endnotes to *The Waste Land,* in which he claims that his poem's "title, . . . the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism were suggested by" Weston's volume (Eliot, *Complete* 50). In 1923, the year he began work on *The Bridge,* Crane acknowledged in a letter to Gorham Munson that for the previous two years his poetry had "been more influenced by Eliot than any other modern," but, he added, "I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb and assemble toward a more positive, or . . . ecstatic goal," for he thought of *The Waste Land* as representing the "perfection of death" (308). And in 1930 when *The Bridge* was completed, he wrote to Selden Rodman that the poem was "an affirmation of experience, and to that extent is 'positive' rather than 'negative' in the sense that *The Waste Land* is 'negative'" (Weber, *Letters* 351).

In *The Bridge* the "circular" journey into the future that will lead back to the original visionary America does not take us to a different physical place (the original America we seek is the land beneath our feet) but to a different metaphysical place. It takes us back into the past in order to see the future and then returns us to the same land—"our native clay / . . . Those continental folded aeons, surcharged / With sweetness below derricks, chimneys, tunnels— / . . . veined by all that time has really pledged us . . . " (54)—but a land differently apprehended, one requiring an altered mode of representation. In terms of figuration, Crane evokes this return to a place that is physically the same but metaphysically different by transfiguring the opening section's more or less realistic depiction of the actual bridge into the closing section's more abstract or futurist evocation of the visionary bridge.

Just as *The Bridge*'s opening and closing sections occupy positions in its overall scheme that are structurally similar to those of the ceiling and altar paintings in the Sistine Chapel (images of the origin and of the end-as-return-to-origin), so the structural function of the poem's intervening

sections (from "Ave Maria" to "The Tunnel") is analogous to that of the series of panels depicting the lives of Moses and Jesus along the chapel's side and rear walls. We noted earlier how the prefigurative relationship between Columbus and Whitman parallels that of Moses and Jesus, and since the poetic quester begins his search for American origins by placing himself between the figures of Columbus and Whitman, it is not surprising that the sections of the poem depicting his quest treat the historical timeline in a manner similar to that of the sequential vectors (both horizontal and depth perspectival) in the two series of panels on the Sistine's side walls. Looking at the poem's middle sections as if they were panels in a polyptych, we can see that despite their disjunctiveness, the sections are arranged along something like a timeline that runs from Columbus's fifteenth-century voyage of discovery ("Ave Maria") to the quester's twentieth-century dream vision ("Harbor Dawn"), then back through American history ("Van Winkle," "The River") to the pre-Columbian world of the Indians ("The Dance"), and back once again (in the opposite direction) through American history ("Indiana," "Cutty Sark") to the twentieth century ("Cape Hatteras," "Quaker Hill," "The Tunnel").

In taking in at a single glance the entire sweep of history represented by these sections, we seem to be standing outside or above the historical timeline, looking at right angles to it as it extends horizontally across these sections, in much the same way that in standing back to view the entire series of tableaux depicting Jesus's life in the Sistine Chapel, for example, we are looking at right angles to the horizontal timeline that runs from left to right across these paintings. Yet we can also focus at any given moment on a single panel, such as Rosselli's *The Sermon on the Mount,* within whose painted depth of foreground, middle ground, and background a temporal sequence of events has been arrayed, so that in gazing into that depth we are looking, as it were, along the length of the timeline as well. Similarly, in *The Bridge* we can, while looking at right angles to the timeline running across the sections, also focus on a single section such as "Cutty Sark," in which the twentieth-century quester's vision of the clipper ships allows us to look along the length of that line as the quester gazes back into the past.

In considering the poem's sections as a disjunctive series of depth-perspectival narrative tableaux like those on the Sistine's side walls, we find ourselves looking at time from two different perspectives at once—outside or above it (looking at right angles to the timeline that sweeps across the sections) and simultaneously within it (looking backward or forward along it into the past or future). This sense of viewing an event from inside and outside time at the same instant recalls Crane's sense of reaching a "higher consciousness" one day in 1922 under anesthesia in a dentist's chair. He later described the experience to Gorham Munson: "my mind spiraled to a kind of seventh heaven of consciousness . . . and something like an objective voice kept saying to me—'You have the higher consciousness—you have the higher consciousness. This is something that very few have. This is what is called genius.' A happiness, ecstatic such as I have known only

twice in 'inspirations' came over me. I felt the two worlds. And at once. As the bore went into my tooth I was able to follow its every revolution as detached as a spectator at a funeral. O Gorham, I have known moments in eternity" (281–82).

Crane's experience of the "two worlds . . . at once" involves his being located simultaneously in time and eternity—inside his body, feeling the bore going into his tooth, and outside the temporal limits of that body, looking back at himself "as detached as a spectator at a funeral." Our sense of the reality or unreality of Crane's visionary experience is, of course, not the issue here. What interests us is that Crane images this visionary higher consciousness as a simultaneous dual perspective transcending the ordinary temporal limits of perception, a perspective that involves, in effect, two points of view that are physically incompatible at the same time for a single observer. In a similar manner the image of the poem's historical timeline viewed simultaneously from a dual perspective symbolically evokes this visionary higher consciousness through the same physical incompatibility, in normal perception, of simultaneous side and front views of an object.

This dual perspective involves two different types of foreshadowing. The kind of literal foreshadowing that we have dealt with so far has its roots in Plato's allegory of the cave and involves the projection of a shadow outline, located above and behind the observer, onto a screen or ground in front of him. This structure assumes that the viewer is looking into the future along the length of the historical timeline, and it addresses the problem of how we could see something's shadow *before* we see the thing itself. In effect it treats the historical timeline as if it were a great circle on a sphere, so that as the viewer moves along the line his ultimate future goal is at once in front of and behind him and thus remains unseen (i.e., still below the sphere's horizon), yet able to cast its shadow over his shoulder from behind.[1]

In contrast to this type of configuration there is another, which we might call lateral foreshadowing. This form of image projection involves the casting of a shadow horizontally across the visual field by an object located at the side but concealed from the viewer's gaze by an intervening surface. Examples of this type of foreshadowing are familiar from the work of the Italian artist Giorgio De Chirico, one of Crane's favorite modern painters. In works such as *The Nostalgia of the Infinite* (1913–14) and *The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* (1914), we gaze along the length of a street whose buildings conceal from our view an object or person located in the plaza at the street's end, an object or person lighted from the side so that their shadow falls from right to left across the plaza. If the viewer could enter the picture space and walk toward the plaza (as the little girl with the hoop is doing in *The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*; fig. 6.1), advancing into that painted depth equated with the future, then he would have, on reaching the open square, an unobstructed view of the concealed person whose meeting the picture foreshadows.

This form of lateral foreshadowing is significant for our purposes because it provides an analogue for the interaction involved in viewing the

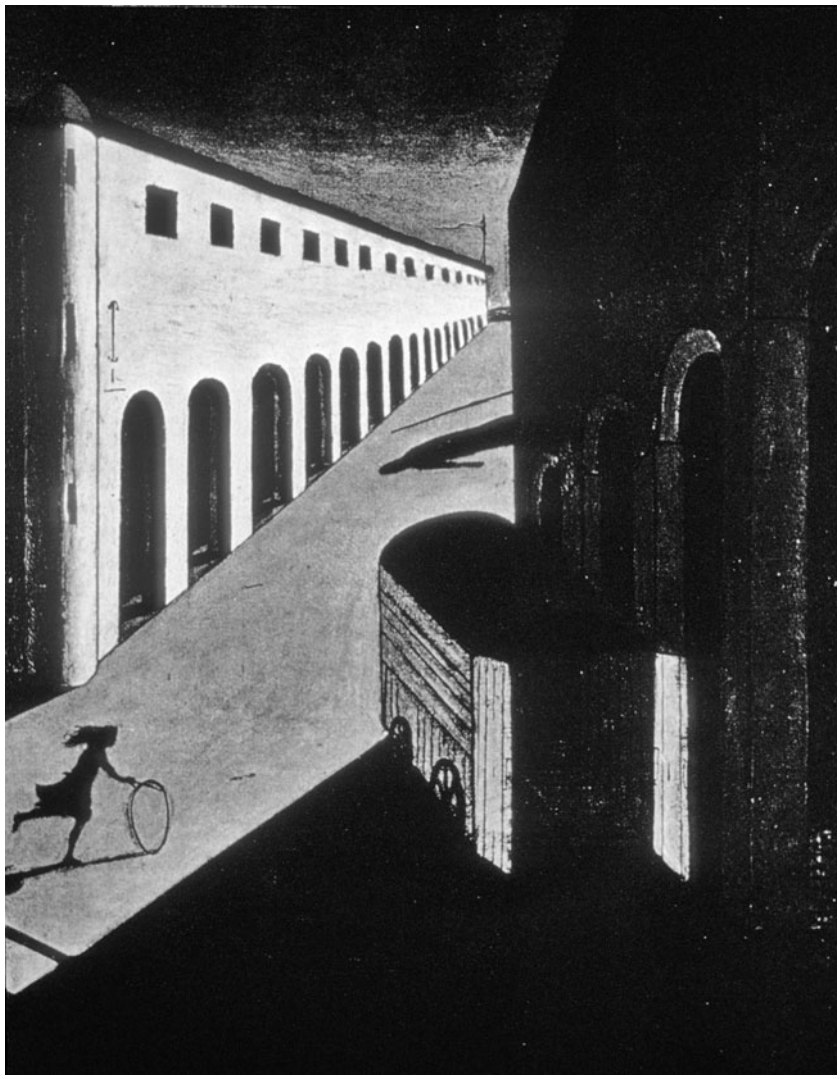

Figure 6.1. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 34½ × 28¼ in. Private collection. Copyright 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome.

poem's historical timeline simultaneously from the side (as it extends across the sections) and along its length (within an individual section). Consider, for example, the quester's dream vision in "The Harbor Dawn" of the mysterious woman he will later call Pocahontas. In his 1927 letter to Otto Kahn, Crane says that Pocahontas "is the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil," and he explains that "Harbor Dawn" and the other four sections that make up "Powhatan's Daughter" (Part II of *The Bridge*) "are mainly concerned with a gradual exploration of this 'body' whose first possessor was the Indian" (554). Regarding his method of representing this gradual exploration, he adds,

> It seemed altogether ineffective, from the poetic standpoint, to approach this material from the purely chronological angle—beginning with, say, the landing of *The Mayflower,* continuing with a resumé of the Revolution through the conquest of the West, etc. One can get that viewpoint in any history primer. What I am after is an assimilation of this experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present.
>
> Consequently I jump from the monologue of Columbus in "Ave Maria"—right across the four intervening centuries—into the harbor of 20th-century Manhattan. And from that point in time and place I begin to work backward through the pioneer period, always in terms of the present—finally to the very core of the nature-world of the Indian. (554)

What Crane's lengthy statement is meant to explain, of course, is the chronological disjunction between contiguous sections ("Ave Maria" and "Harbor Dawn") at the start of his poem, a "jump" over "four intervening centuries" of history that Crane makes in placing the twentieth-century quester's dream vision of Pocahontas next to Columbus's prayer to the Virgin Mary. Considered in pictorial terms, this chronological disjunction amounts simply to a radical foreshortening of history in the service of foreshadowing. Looking into the "separate canvas" of "Harbor Dawn," we are meant to see the shadow of Columbus falling laterally from beyond the section's frame across the poetic quester's dream vision of rediscovering the pre-Columbian "nature-world of the Indian," that "original" world in which the Indian was wed to the land in much the same way that the quester dreams of being physically joined to the virgin continent symbolized by Pocahontas. Indeed, this sense of lateral foreshadowing is supported by an earlier version of "Harbor Dawn" (published in the June 1927 issue of *transition*), which opens with the image of a shadow cast across the quester's dreams. The harbor sounds that awaken the quester associate his journey into the realm of sleep with an ocean voyage and at the same time, through the image of "Gongs in white surplices" (38), evoke the liturgical context of Angelus and Ave Maria in Columbus's prayer to the Virgin. In the final version of "Harbor Dawn," Crane describes these sounds as "a tide of voices" (38), where in the earlier version he says that for the quester, awakened by the harbor noises evocative of Columbus's homeward voyage, it is as if "in sleep . . . a shadow bloomed aloud" ("Harbor Dawn" 120).

This lateral foreshadowing across sections involves, however, more than just the association of the quester with Columbus, for as the shadow of Columbus (praying to the Virgin Mother to grant him safe return home) falls across the image of the poetic quester (dreaming of a sexual union with the maiden Pocahontas), there occurs a further superimposition of images that indicates the latent meaning of the poem's pervasive desire to return to origins, a wish that only the mother can grant. The desire to return to the matrix (a return forbidden by the father who exiles us from our origins) seeks to circumvent this paternal prohibition by expressing itself in the quester's dream (where the virgin mother veils her identity in the dark

other) through the figure of the Indian maiden whose promiscuity counteracts the death-hedged, sacred aura of the maternal image. Crane emphasizes Pocahontas's promiscuity at the start of "Powhatan's Daughter" in an epigraph that evokes her as "*a well-featured but wanton yong girle*" who entices the boys to follow her as she turns cartwheels "*naked as she was, all the fort over*" (38). And in the subsequent poems dealing with Pocahontas, he repeatedly points out that she has had many lovers.

Yet if the mystery of the Virgin Mary, to whom Columbus prays in "Ave Maria," is that though she is a mother, she is still a virgin, the mystery of Pocahontas, the dream maiden whom the quester pursues in "Powhatan's Daughter," is that though she has had many lovers, she too is still a virgin. The paradox of the virgin continent is how sexually incontinent she can be without it affecting her virginity. When the quester comes upon the scene of Pocahontas and Maquokeeta's interrupted lovemaking at the beginning of "The Dance," it is the maiden's virginity he comments on: "There was a bed of leaves, and broken play; / There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride— / O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May; / And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride" (45). And at the end of "The Dance" when Pocahontas's Indian lover has departed, leaving her to be possessed by the whites who succeed him, Crane says, "she is virgin to the last of men" (48). What the lateral foreshadowing between the "Ave Maria" and "Harbor Dawn" sections effects, then, is not simply a superimposition of the images of Columbus and the poetic quester but of their objects of desire, a merging of the image of the virgin mother with that of the virgin lover to create a complex female figure whose triple aspect (mother-virgin-lover) is the subject of the "Three Songs" section.

In the first of these songs, "Southern Cross," the quester, seeking a name for the archetypal female who is the origin and object of desire, calls out, "Eve! Magdalene! or Mary, you?" (61). And at the end of the poem, in addressing her as the "wraith of my unloved seed" (62), he associates this figure, who combines aspects of mother Eve, the Virgin Mary, and the prostitute Mary Magdalene, with the mysterious dream maiden of "Harbor Dawn"—"*there in a waking dream to merge your seed—with whom? Who is the woman with us in the dawn?*" (38–39).

This female of the triple aspect, who bears us all, gives herself to every man, and yet remains "virgin to the last of men," represents mother earth or, more specifically in *The Bridge,* the virgin continent of America. But she is also the American muse, as suggested by the quester's pursuit of the dream maiden Pocahontas, a pursuit that evokes similar ones in Shelley's *Alastor* and Keats's *Endymion.* Precisely because Pocahontas functions as the quester's muse, the affirmation of her inexhaustible virginity is a matter of crucial importance for the poem. For if the future of America which the poem prophesies is an ultimate return to the virgin freshness of the New World or, more precisely, to that myth of America as the New Eden—where one can always start anew because the origin is still present to us and all things truly American (our natural resources, our will, our energy and enthusiasm, and, most of all, our ingenuity, American originality it-

self) are inexhaustible—then the practical test of this belief, in terms of the poem, will be *The Bridge*'s demonstration of the inexhaustible originality of American poetry, the possibility that every American poet, no matter how late he comes in the tradition, can enjoy an original relationship with the muse.

In this test of the American muse's perpetual virginity, the figure with whom the quester must compete is not the discoverer of geographic America (Columbus) but the discoverer of visionary America (Whitman). The American muse, the dark or veiled (m)other, whom Crane calls "Pocahontas," Whitman had invoked by a variety of names—night, sleep, death, the mother, the sea—though he knew that her essence lay beyond all names. And it is precisely this aspect of the muse that Crane singles out in "Southern Cross" when, at the start of the poem's night sea journey (in which images of desire, sleep, and death are associated with the mother-virgin-lover figure), he addresses her as the "nameless Woman of the South" and says, "I wanted you . . . / It is blood to remember; it is fire / To stammer back . . . It is / God—your namelessness" (61). The namelessness of the muse is what constitutes her inexhaustible virginity, for since her nature is transfigurative, it admits of endless refigurations. The strength of Crane's renaming of the muse, in its attempt to vie with Whitman's originality, is precisely its self-conscious evocation, through the slippage of names (Eve, Mary, Magdalene, Venus, Pocahontas), of this transfigurative nature.

§ 7
The Return to Origin; the Total Return to the Womb; the Primal Scene; Vision and Invisibility; the Dual Identification

In "Ave Maria," Columbus, at night in mid-ocean, prays to the Virgin Mother for safe return home, a veiled wish whose fantasized fulfillment occurs in "The Harbor Dawn" section when the quester "midway" in his nocturnal journey is recalled "*from the soundless shore of sleep*" to merge his seed with a mysterious woman "*in a waking dream*" (38). The superimposition of Columbus's prayer upon the quester's dream vision merges the images of night, sleep, the sea, and the mother and thus invests the return home with associations of amniotic sleep. And this figuration of the return to origin continues in the "Van Winkle" section as the quester starts his imaginative journey back to the beginnings of the New World by remembering his own childhood and his first acquaintance with the figures of American myth and history—Pizarro, Cortes, Priscilla Alden, Captain John Smith, Rip Van Winkle (39)—a return in which the mysterious woman who leads the quester back to his childhood is associated with the muse of poetry, Memory (40). That the quester's guide in this section is Rip Van Winkle, the most famous sleeper in American literature, suggests the journey's prenatal goal, the state Crane evoked as "sleep, death, desire" (25) in his description of the night sea in "Voyages II." And indeed, one finds throughout "Powhatan's Daughter" the influence of Whitman's most eloquent celebration of

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sleep, death, and desire, his poem "The Sleepers," with its images of "the beautiful lost swimmer" (Whitman 301), the homeward voyage to sleep, and its concluding hymn to the mothering night:

> I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again and love you.
>
> Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
> I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by you,
> I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I lay so long,
> I know not how I came of you and I know not where I go with you, but I
> know I came well and shall go well.
>
> I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,
> I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return to you. (Whitman 303)

With Whitman's poem as allusive background, it is not surprising that the quester, in rummaging through his childhood memories of American originals in company with the mythic sleeper Van Winkle, suddenly comes upon an enigmatic image of his own mother:

> So memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box,
> Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass—
> Is it the whip stripped from the lilac tree
> One day in spring my father took to me,
> Or is it the Sabbatical, unconscious smile
> My mother almost brought me once from church
> And once only, as I recall—?
>
> It flickered through the snow screen, blindly
> It forsook her at the doorway, it was gone
> Before I left the window. It
> Did not return with the kiss in the hall. (40)

The father (who forbids and punishes) and the mother (whose "unconscious smile," veiled by "the snow screen," seems to promise that the mother's desire mirrors the son's) together form an image-complex that governs the remaining sections of "Powhatan's Daughter" as the quester, seeking to establish his poetic authority through an original relationship to the muse, must establish his temporal priority to the father. Accordingly, in "The River" the quester continues his imaginative journey back to American origins by identifying himself with the hoboes he had seen behind his "father's cannery works" (42) as a child, wanderers over the land who represent for the quester the remnants of the pioneers, as well as a challenge and alternative to the workaday world of the cannery where his father is boss.

The "cannery works" is, of course, a detail from Crane's own life. At one point Crane's father owned a maple syrup cannery in Warren, Ohio, and the opposition between the working world of the factory and the life of the hoboes was one that C. A. Crane, who considered his son's youthful interest in poetry childish and effeminate, frequently invoked later in trying to convince Hart to enter the family business. In the elder Crane's

view, being a poet was no different from being a hobo, a bum. The quester's identification with the hoboes is in one sense, then, an act of resistance to the father's authority. But it is also part of that return to origin that the quester initiates with his childhood memories of mythic American figures, for the basis of this identification is that, like the small boy who watches them, the hoboes too are children: "Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch, / Holding to childhood like some termless play" (42). And as such, they enjoy a special relationship to the maternal body of the continent, the child's privileged touching of the mother's body that is forbidden to the grown son:

> Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.
> From pole to pole across the hills, the states
> —They know a body under the wide rain; . . .
> They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast
> Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—
> Is past the valley sleepers, south or west.
> —As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,
>
> And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame
> (O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)
> Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name. (43)

But what the quester seeks in his return is not simply to touch the mother's breast but to enter wholly into her body, a reincorporation synonymous with death. To achieve this, he imaginatively identifies himself with a fictive hobo named Dan Midland, killed riding the rods ("jolted from the cold brake-beam" by a sinister paternal figure addressed as "Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority" [44]), a hobo whose body is thrown into the Mississippi and floats down to the Gulf. Midland's name not only suggests his midcontinental point of entry into the maternal body but recalls as well Columbus's mid-ocean prayer to the virgin mother for safe return home and the quester's encounter with the mysterious woman "midway" in his dream (38).

One of the contemporary works that influenced the composition of *The Bridge* was William Carlos Williams's collage of American history and myth, *In the American Grain* (1925). In his chapter on Poe, Williams says that "one is forced on the conception of the New World as a woman" (220), and he embodies this in the chapter "De Soto and the New World" where the woman-continent tells of her desire to be possessed by, and in that act to possess, the Spanish explorer whom she has lured across country "nearer, nearer" (55), making him "lonesome, ready for my caresses" (48). When De Soto reaches the Mississippi River, the woman-continent says, "Now you are over, you have straddled me, this is my middle" (52). Later, De Soto's corpse is "committed to the middle of the stream" and returns to the mother's body: "Down, down, this *solitary sperm,* down into the liquid, the formless, the insatiable belly of sleep; down among the fishes" (58, italics mine). In "The River" Crane echoes this passage in describing the Mis-

sissippi passing "over De Soto's bones" (45) as it moves seaward, bearing the body of Dan Midland and all those who "feed the River timelessly": "Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite, / Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow— / They win no frontier by their wayward plight, / But drift in stillness as from Jordan's brow" (44). As the river of time flows back toward the timeless gulf (the unconscious state before birth), the quester, identifying himself with the body in the water, acts out that dream of an absolute temporal priority to the father that is implicit in the desire for poetic originality: "The River, spreading, flows—and spends your dream. / What are you, lost within this tideless spell? / You are your father's father, and the stream—" (44).

In his chapter on Poe, Williams says that just as "one is forced on the conception of the New World as a woman," so one must regard Poe as "a new De Soto" (220), for Poe, "madly, valiantly battling for the right to BE first—to hold up his ORIGINALITY" (223), sought to create an American style of writing, to form a poetic relationship with that woman-continent, the American muse, that would, in Williams's view, be "immaculate" (220). Williams contends that the essence of Poe's style is "a 'childlike,' simple, deductive reasoning . . . —a sense of BEGINNING—of originality that presupposes an intrinsic WORTH in the reasoner" (224). Given this image of Poe as "a new De Soto" whose attempt to create an original American style involves "a 'childlike' . . . reasoning" that produces an "immaculate" "conception of the New World as a woman," it is not surprising that later in *The Bridge,* when the quester makes a literal descent into the maternal body of the earth during his subway ride under the East River, he confronts the image of Poe's death. In staging this confrontation beneath the river, Crane places Poe in a position like that of the real De Soto whose bones lie at the bottom of the Mississippi. Which is to say that De Soto and Poe—the explorer of the woman-continent and the poet who sought an original relationship with the American muse—both end up in a kind of timeless, submarine space that evokes the matrix, a space in which originality—De Soto was the "discoverer" of the Mississippi, and Poe the originator of "the American prose style" ("On him is FOUNDED A LITERATURE," says Williams [223])—is synonymous with a return to origin so absolute that one not only achieves priority to the father but becomes identified with the mother.

In describing the quester's visionary encounter with Poe during the subway ride beneath the river, Crane subtly underlines the submarine location by echoing a line from one of Poe's most famous poems, "The City in the Sea" (1831–45). Based on "legends about the ruins of the cities sunken in the Dead Sea" (Poe, *Collected* 1:197) the poem describes a submerged city where "the good and the bad and the worst and the best / Have gone to their eternal rest" while "from a proud tower in the town / Death looks gigantically down" (1:201–2). In his essay on Poe in *In the American Grain,* Williams says, "It is especially in the poetry where 'death looked gigantically down' that the horror of the formless resistance which opposed, maddened, destroyed him has forced its character into the air, the wind, the

blessed galleries of paradise, above a morose, dead world, peopled by shadows and silence, and despair—it is the compelling force of his isolation" (231). And thus in "The Tunnel" the quester, confronting his own isolated mortality in the image of Poe's, sees "Death, aloft,—gigantically down / Probing through you—toward me, O evermore!" (69).

Clearly, we are meant to associate the submarine (amniotic) world in which Crane places American originals like De Soto and Poe (historical figures translated into myth) with the sunken island-continent of Atlantis, his symbol of the mythic original (pre-Columbian) America that was submerged by the white man's coming. This mythic virgin America is "timeless" in the sense that it precedes the beginning of historical America (the penetration of the dark mother-continent by the powerful white fathers) in much the same way that the infant's unconscious intrauterine existence precedes the beginning of its personal history at birth, but it is also timeless in the sense that, as an originating ground present at every moment in American history, this mythic space must itself be outside time, exempt from the flux and erosion of history. The poetic quester, in his imaginary journey back to American origins, reaches "the pure mythical and smoky soil" (556) of the pre-Columbian "nature-world of the Indian" by identifying himself with the body of Dan Midland, imagined as a "solitary sperm" (as in Williams's description of DeSoto's body) floating down the river to that timeless, amniotic realm that represents for Crane the dwelling place of American originals. And the transition from the ending of "The River" (the quester's submergence in the Father of Waters, imagined as a seminal fluid) to the beginning of "The Dance" (the quester's reappearance paddling a canoe downstream in pre-Columbian America) in effect superimposes the image of the submarine (amniotic) world of personal origin upon that of mythic America. The quester's return to the mythic "nature-world of the Indian" structurally replicates the infantile fantasy of a total return to the womb, and it is in a condition structurally analogous to that of a child in the womb that the quester witnesses in "The Dance" the primal scene of origin in which the sky god inseminates the earth goddess in a thunderstorm.

Before proceeding further we should distinguish the various structures Crane combines in the symbolic mating of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas. First, there is the mythic origin conceived as a *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage of opposites, in this case the marriage of sky and earth, a structure that is at least as old in Western written tradition as Hesiod's *Theogony.* Such a myth depicts the people inhabiting a region as the children of this elemental mating, but in *The Bridge* the union of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas represents Crane's idealized vision of an origin in which a people (the American Indians) are wed to a land such that they care for and cultivate it as if it were a beloved spouse—an idealized vision of origin that Crane proposes for America's future as an alternative to what he considers the white man's rapacious exploitation of the landscape. By inflecting the *hieros gamos* structure so that the land's inhabitants (characteristically considered as the children of this sacred marriage) are now evoked as being

wed to the maternal soil, Crane subtly evokes the image of a child mating with its mother. This image brings us to the second and third structures Crane joins to the sacred marriage—the fantasies of the primal scene and of a total return to the womb that suggest how Crane's personal psychology inhabited the mythic structures he deployed in *The Bridge*.

In presenting the poetic quester as *witnessing* the union of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, Crane in effect invokes the structure of a "primal scene" (the child's real or imagined observation of parental coitus), the fantasy that Freud discussed at length in his 1914 work "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (the case of the so-called "Wolf Man"). Freud came to consider the primal scene as one of the "primal fantasies," all of which are related to the notion of origins and each of which solved some "major enigma for the child" (Laplanche and Pontalis 332), in the case of the primal scene the question of the origin of the self, with the child fantasizing its own conception in the imagined scene of parental coitus. Freud suggests that the primal scene is often not something actually seen by the child but rather something imagined from the sounds of parental lovemaking overheard at night.

In "The Dance" Crane has the poetic quester not only witness the sacred marriage but also imaginatively participate in it by identifying with Maquokeeta. Indeed, in the same work in which Freud deals with the fantasy of the primal scene, he discusses the womb fantasy. He observes that the Wolf Man "wished he could be back in the womb, not simply in order that he might then be re-born, but in order that he might be copulated with there by his father, might obtain sexual satisfaction from him, and might bear him a child . . . all of this at the price of his own masculinity, and expressed in the language of anal erotism—these wishes complete the circle of his fixation upon his father. In them homosexuality has found its furthest and most intimate expression" (17:101). In contrast to this reading, which associates male homosexuality with a fixation on the father, Freud's most extensive discussion of the origins of homosexuality, his lengthy 1910 essay "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," argues that its root lies in the unsatisfied mother's taking "her little son in place of her husband, and by the too early maturing of his erotism" robbing "him of a part of his masculinity" (11:117).

Clearly, both of these readings would have resonance for Crane's sexual orientation as it related to his ambivalent attitudes to both parents. Recall that in Crane's literary and artistic set in the 1920s psychoanalysis was a common topic of conversation. Furthermore, Crane had acquired a more detailed knowledge of Freud's theories as they applied to his own case from his friend Solomon Grunberg, who was part owner of a bookstore Crane frequented and a practicing lay analyst at the time Crane knew him. Crane's biographer John Unterecker reports that though Hart "declined Grunberg's offer to explore his mind ('If I let myself be psychoanalyzed, I'll never finish *The Bridge*!'), he did, on long walks, take advantage of Grunberg's listening silences, his offhand leading questions, his summaries of pertinent 'classical' cases" (566). One can be fairly sure, given Crane's homosexuality,

that the case of the Wolf Man and the essay on Leonardo da Vinci would have been foremost among Grunberg's "summaries of pertinent 'classical' cases." Moreover, Crane's remark that, if he allowed himself to be psychoanalyzed, he'd never finish *The Bridge* clearly indicates his own awareness of how significantly his personal psychology (his sexual orientation and his relation to his parents) lay at the heart of his epic. Of course, the current validity of Freud's theories of the origins of homosexuality is not at issue here. In Crane's time and place, they would have been authoritative, and we know he had some knowledge of them. Consequently, a brief digression to examine the way these psychoanalytic structures impinged on *The Bridge* is in order.

In "The Dance" Crane images the coming of the Amerindian sky god in a thunderstorm to fertilize the earth goddess as if it were a gigantic aerial snake dance, one presumably brought about in response to the chieftain Maquokeeta's performing this same archetypal form of Indian rain dance. Thus the storm ("A distant cloud, a thunder-bud") is depicted as the "blanket of the skies: the padded foot / Within . . . ," causing that "long moan of a dance . . . in the sky" (46–47). Maquokeeta in his ritual role as sky god is associated with the eagle and the serpent: "A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest / Sweeping in eagle feathers down" his back while "lightning deltaed down" his "saber hair" and "red fangs / And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air" (46–47). In Indian lore thunder was imaged as the flapping of the thunderbird's wings and lightning as the striking of a serpent. In combining the images of eagle and serpent, Crane was reprising the image from "The River" of the Amerindian nature world ("But I knew her body there / Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, an eaglet's wing laid on her hair" [43]), and, in attaching this combined image to Maquokeeta, Crane meant to associate the chieftain with the Aztec Indian god Quetzalcoatl, whose name literally means the bird-serpent or feathered serpent. Crane had learned much about Quetzalcoatl's lore that seemed particularly relevant to the subject of *The Bridge* from two books he read in 1926—Lewis Spence's *Atlantis in America* (462) and D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (434), both of which we examine in later sections.

What most interests us here about the combined image as applied to Maquokeeta is that both bird and serpent are phallic symbols. The physical shape of a snake bears an obvious resemblance to the penis, while Freud in his da Vinci essay explicates the phallic significance of birds, observing "that the ancients represented the phallus as having wings" and "that the commonest expression in German for male sexual activity is '*vögeln*' ["to bird": "*Vögel*" is the German for "bird"]; that the male organ is actually called '*l'uccello*' ["the bird"] in Italian" (Freud, 11:125).[1] Crane's evocation of Maquokeeta through this combined bird-serpent image in effect reduces Maquokeeta's body to a phallic signifier. And since the penis is the normal means of an adult male's entry into the womb in intercourse, this reduction becomes the means of symbolically effecting a fantasized total return to the womb, part standing for whole. This part-for-whole symbolization, of course, evokes one of the major significations of the phallus (the cult object

made in the shape of a penis): the object's detachability, a detachability that suggests an independent existence that transcends the body's limits (hence its ancient winged form) and that symbolizes something which (unlike the father's penis in intercourse) is actually detachable from the father's body (his sperm) and can create an independently existing being.

The Freudian analyst Otto Rank in *The Trauma of Birth* (1924) notes that the literal return of an adult body to the womb, its total reincorporation, would necessarily involve violence either to the mother's body or the son's and that thus there is a sadomasochistic component to the infantile fantasy of a total return. If the fantasy emphasizes violence to the mother's body, the sadistic component is dominant; if it emphasizes violence to the son's, the masochistic. This sadomasochistic component in the womb fantasy makes itself felt as Crane adds one further element to the scenario of Maquokeeta's mating with Pocahontas. The rainstorm that begins by fertilizing the earth goddess suddenly becomes, as the spark of the serpent-lightning metamorphoses into flames, the pyre that consumes Maquokeeta, who is imagined as tied to a stake, shot with arrows, and burned alive. And it is precisely at this moment in "The Dance" that the poetic quester's identification with Maquokeeta becomes explicit, as "buzzard-circleted" he "screamed from the stake":

> I could not pick the arrows from my side.
> Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake—
> Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.
>
> I heard the hush of lava wrestling your arms,
> And stag teeth foam about the raven throat;
> Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms
> Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat. (47)

In his essay "The Acquisition and Control of Fire," Freud, discussing the myth of the phoenix (the bird periodically consumed by flames that rises again from its own ashes), notes that "there can be no doubt about the mythological significance of flame as a phallus" (22:190–91). Thus the lava image, merging the thunderstorm's rain and lightning (a seminal fluid and a phallic flame) into a fiery liquid, represents a form of primal matter that reduces Maquokeeta's body and absorbs it into the earth goddess, the landscape that forms as lava cools. Note that the lava image also occurs in "Cutty Sark" as part of the song of the sunken Atlantis ("*teased remnants of the skeletons of cities— / and galleries, galleries of watergutted lava / snarling stone—green—drums—drown*" [52]), again evoking the association in Crane's mind of a fiery liquid and a submarine (amniotic) world. As Crane phrased it in his letter to Otto Kahn, Maquokeeta is "assumed into the elements of nature" until he "persists only as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or as a star that hangs between day and night" (556). Crane no doubt meant that Maquokeeta's spirit was translated into the night sky as the Morning/Evening Star, the star of twilight: "I saw thy change begun! // And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny / Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent

/ At last with all that's consummate and free / There, where the first and last gods keep their tent" (47). The other element that Crane added to the sacred marriage of sky and earth was, then, a *Liebestod,* a love-death, for while the sacred marriage symbolized Crane's ideal of a people wedded to a land, it was also a proleptic image of the Amerindians' loss of their world with the arrival of the whites, a loss figured as Maquokeeta's death and immolation. And that love-death is the moment of sadomasochistic identification of the poetic quester with the suffering chieftain.

If the imagery at the end of "The River" symbolically depicts the poetic quester's return to the pre-Columbian "nature-world" as a return to the womb, then it would seem that, in Crane's imagining of the mating scene in "The Dance," the womb fantasy in some sense governs the fantasy of the primal scene, which is to say that the place from which the child imagines himself witnessing his own conception is from *within the mother's womb.* This location would certainly satisfy the son's desire for temporal priority to the father, which the poetic quester expressed in "The River" ("You are your father's father, and the stream—" [44]). And this location would cast further light on Crane's evoking Maquokeeta's persistence after his death "as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or as a star that hangs between day and night." One of the principal impulses in the fantasy of the primal scene, the fantasy of seeing oneself conceived, is the desire to be an eye without having to be an I, to have the power of vision without the vulnerability of being visible, to be present as an unlimited consciousness before one is present as a limited body. This desire for a vision expressive of, and based on, the observer's own invisibility inherent in the fantasy may reflect the child's fear of being discovered in the act of observing a real scene of parental coitus, his fear of being punished or sent away, and thus his sense that the condition of this seeing is that he himself must remain unseen. This desire for unlimited vision combined with personal invisibility suggests another aspect of the womb fantasy. Rank notes in *The Trauma of Birth* that a common form the fantasy takes in mythology is the motif of a magic garment or covering that makes the wearer invulnerable to harm, often by making him invisible, as for example "the 'clouds' or 'mist' of Athene, protecting the Trojan heroes in danger" (107 n.), the coverings being symbols of "the child's invulnerability protected *in utero*" (97). Thus, in the fantasy of the primal scene the child sees, within the scene itself, a figuration (i.e., the mother's body) of that covering, that invisible point of sight he desires to occupy in relation to the scene, giving the observer a sort of dual perspective (at once outside and within the scene), which recalls Crane's description of his experience under anesthetic in the dentist's chair.

In fantasy, in the mind's eye, one has the power to "see" while remaining invisible, the power to render a scene imaginatively present to oneself without having to be present in turn to the participants in that scene. The great exemplar of this power is the ability to visualize a scene at which one was not only not present but could not have been present because one did not yet exist. Yet the difficulty here is that the physical origin of the body and the psychic (symbolic-linguistic) origin of the self are two different

things. It is impossible for self-consciousness literally to imagine its own absence, for thought to think its own nonexistence. To fantasize a primal scene of origin in which one's nonexistence is signified by the nonappearance of one's body within the scene is an illusion, for the self still exists as the scene's imaginative observer. And that observing consciousness—in spite of the powerful wish-fantasy implicit in the primal scene (that is, that the existence of one's own self-consciousness is separate from and prior to the existence of one's body and thus not subject to the body's mortality, a wish-fantasy expressed by the combination of bodily absence [invisibility] and psychic presence [observation])—always leaves within the scene a visible trace of its invisible presence, a veiled or encrypted image of the observing I/eye.

As opposed to the primal scene in which one "sees" the physical origin of one's body, the fantasized origin of self-consciousness, as evoked for example in the myth of Narcissus, involves seeing oneself (i.e., one's self, the invisible mental observer) in the act of gazing at an *image* of one's body. What is at issue in this case is precisely the difference between one's physical body and its strangely insubstantial image (insubstantial in Narcissus's case because the image that is reflected on the pool's surface disperses at a mere touch, a combination of the intangible and yet visible that serves to evoke the body's psychic double and its realm of mental images). And the implication of Narcissus's self-recognition scene is that the power to distinguish between one's physical body and an intangible (mental) image of that body bears within it the illusion that these distinct aspects of the self can be wholly separated from one another, that the observing consciousness can exist independently of the body. One could say, then, that in the fantasy of the primal scene (the fantasy of an independent, disembodied [invisible] self-consciousness observing the physical conception of its body), the sense of the scene's fantasized (i.e., illusory or contradictory) character is present within it in the form of a ghost image of the Narcissus scene, a veiled or encrypted image of the eye looking back at itself (at its self) in the act of looking. And that is, of course, what the scene of mating in "The Dance" turns into with Maquokeeta's death and stellar translation, for as the poetic quester had observed the union of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, so he now sees Maquokeeta (transformed, as Crane says, into "a kind of 'eye' in the sky") observing his beloved Pocahontas as the land is possessed by white men. And Crane emphasizes Maquokeeta's role as passive onlooker in this new world where "other calendars now stack the sky": "Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou *gaze*— / Across what bivouacs of thine angered slain, / And *see'st* thy bride immortal in the maize!" (48, italics mine). The poetic quester thus sees within the primal scene a mirror image of himself observing the scene, sees himself as the metamorphosed chieftain transformed into a passive observer of Pocahontas's possession by the whites.

This ultimate transformation of Maquokeeta into an onlooker raises the question of the relation between activity and passivity in the role of the primal scene's imagined observer—which not unpredictably turns out to be the question of which of the two figures (male or female) in the imagined

scene of coitus the observer identifies with. In the fantasy of the primal scene, the child (a son, in Freud's case of the Wolf Man) actively imagines himself as a passive observer of parental coitus, and this active imagining of the child's passivity repeats a form of that imaginative reversal of helplessness that Freud discussed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (18:14–17), an imaginative reversal represented by the game of *fort/da* that Freud observed being played by a small child. In that instance the child mastered his feelings of helplessness, caused by his mother's goings and comings, by inventing a game in which the cycle of loss and recovery that previously had been passively endured was now actively initiated by the child as he dispatched and retrieved a symbolic object representing the mother, a spool attached to a string. Viewed in this light the fantasy of the primal scene could be described as an active (self-initiated, male) imaging of the observer's (female) passivity, and this actively sought passivity (understood as the male desire to return to the mother's womb) is represented within "The Dance" by the quester's imaginative identification with Maquokeeta, the active male figure who is first reduced to the phallus-child and then absorbed into the maternal body to persist as a passive observer within the womb.

This merging of active and passive roles, this conjunction of opposites, in a single individual brings us back to the sadomasochistic structure of the fantasized primal scene. According to Freud's "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," the child interprets what he "sees" within the primal scene as "an aggression by the father in a sado-masochistic relationship" (Laplanche and Pontalis 335), which is to say that the child sees the extremes of sexual activity and passivity coded, respectively, as masculine and feminine—the active sadistic father and the passive masochistic mother. But Freud also points out that the scene causes sexual excitement in the child at the same time that it provides a basis for castration anxiety. Thus for the son the fantasized scene both excites an active male attitude and provides apparent evidence, in the father's seeming violence against the mother, for the childish belief that a woman, lacking a penis, is a castrated man, raising the possibility that if the son's active, male attitude brings him into conflict with the father, the son may suffer the same fate. As a result of this anxiety, the son may repress the male attitude in favor of a female one in order both to avoid the feared castration and to retain the father's love. As we noted earlier, such a repression, according to Freud, often gives rise in the son to a fantasy of becoming the father's lover, and this sheds light on Freud's further observation that the child interprets what occurs in the primal scene, "within the framework of an infantile sexual theory, as anal coitus" (Laplanche and Pontalis 335), as a form of coitus in which the passive role can be played either by a female or a submissive male.

What we are faced with, then, in the fantasy of the primal scene is a triangular structure of father, mother, and observing child (a son in this case) in which the two roles involved in the fantasizer's relationship to his own fantasy (his active imagining of himself as a passive observer) are divided and personified in the two active participants *within* the scene (active participants in the sense that, although one of them is coded by the child

as passive in relation to the other, both are part of the sexual activity from which the observer is excluded). The extremes of activity and passivity embodied in the sadistic father and the masochistic mother are thus combined in the son as a double sexual identification within a self-enclosed cycle of imaginative tension and release. Even in the child's game of *fort/da,* we can see traces of this cycle of self-initiated pain and pleasure as the child imaginatively reenacts by means of a symbolic object the painful disappearance of the mother and her joyful return, apparently deriving pleasure from actively recreating his own passive distress and thus mastering it through that very imaginative activity.

Indeed, one could say that all fantasizing involves this union of active and passive roles within the individual, since the fantasizer is both the creator and the observer of his own fantasies—subject and object, cause and effect, in a cyclic drama of an imaginative energy turned back upon itself. But what interests us in the fantasy of the primal scene as it appears in "The Dance" is precisely the extreme form this imaginative energy, not to say imaginative violence, takes. As in so many of Crane's poems, the moment of imaginative identification with the other is here a moment of sadomasochistic violence, an instant of actively fantasized sympathy with the passively suffering martyr. The range of these suffering figures in Crane's poetry runs from the sublime to the comic—from the riven Dionysus and crucified Christ of "Lachrymae Christi" to the decapitated Holofernes and John the Baptist of "The Wine Menagerie," the pierced Absalom of "Recitative," and the disemboweled St. Erasmus of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," and on to the suffering artists Poe and Dickinson in *The Bridge* or Oscar Wilde in "C-33," and finally to the pathetic common man crushed by life, Charlie Chaplin's little tramp in "Chaplinesque" and Stravinsky's forlorn puppet Petrushka in "The Wine Menagerie." Crane's apparently pleasurable poetic activity of imaging the sufferings of the poet in the modern world bears within it the active/passive ambivalence of one twisted "*by the love of things irreconcilable*" (20), to borrow a phrase from "The Marriage of Faustus and Helen," and in "The Dance" the emblem of this union of opposites (of imaginative activity and imagined passivity, of male and female) within the quester's self is the conjunction of eagle and serpent (the erect penis and the flaccid penis in Freud's interpretation) taken as a symbol of the childish, regressive quality of all wish-fantasy that seeks to avoid the adult choice between opposites by imagining their fusion in the womb.

In "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," Freud discusses the way, in the case of the Wolf Man, in which the womb fantasy and the fantasy of rebirth are reciprocals of one another, (the analogues of these two fantasies in "The Dance" being Maquokeeta's absorption into the maternal landscape and his subsequent reappearance as a "kind of 'eye' in the sky"). Freud notes that the womb fantasy

> is frequently derived (as it was in the present case) from an attachment to the father. There is a wish to be inside the mother's womb in order to replace

her during intercourse—in order to take her place in regard to the father. The phantasy of re-birth, on the other hand, is in all probability regularly a softened substitute (a euphemism, one might say) for the phantasy of incestuous intercourse with the mother . . . There is a wish to be back in a situation in which one was in the mother's genitals; and in this connection the man is identifying himself with his own penis and is using it to represent himself. Thus the two phantasies are revealed as one another's counterparts: they give expression, according as the subject's attitude is feminine or masculine, to his wish for sexual intercourse with his father or with his mother. We cannot dismiss the possibility that in the complaint made by our present patient and in the necessary condition laid down for his recovery the two phantasies, that is to say the two incestuous wishes, were united. (Freud 17:101–2)

The possibility that the incestuous wishes for intercourse with the father and the mother may be united in a double sexual identification by the son sheds light on the fact that the ending of "The Dance" places as much emphasis on the imaginative union of the quester with Maquokeeta as it does on the union of both these male figures with the virgin continent:

And when the caribou slant down for salt
Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine
Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault
Of dusk?—And are her perfect brows to thine?

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .
Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
The serpent with the eagle in the boughs. (48)

Though we had earlier interpreted the quester's imaginative identification with male figures such as Maquokeeta and the hobo Dan Midland as the means by which the quester returns to the womb to identify himself with the mother, it is equally possible, indeed perhaps inevitable in light of the double sexual identification present in "The Dance," to interpret this return and the resultant maternal identification as the means by which the son is conjoined with the father and identified with his penis/child. For in each case it is not just a matter of a fantasized conjunction with a parent but a conjunction so complete (a total reincorporation into the mother's womb, a reduction to the paternal phallus) that the child is merged into and identified with that parent. And of course this double identification necessarily involves a paradoxical reversal, for each identification becomes in turn a means of being conjoined with the parent of the opposite sex. In this circular, self-enclosed fantasy, the identification with the male figure is both a means and an end, just as the identification with the female is both an end and a means.

§ 8
The Reversal of the Figures of Father and Mother in "Indiana"; Crane's Dream of the Black Man by the River; Crane's Quarrel with His Father; the Composition of "Black Tambourine"

This double sexual identification involves, by reason of the continuing reversal into the opposite inherent in it, an ambivalence toward both parents that in Crane's case is particularly evident in "Indiana," the final section of "Powhatan's Daughter." In his 1927 letter to Otto Kahn, Crane, noting that the "Indiana" section "is not complete as yet," describes it as "the monologue of an Indiana farmer; time, about 1860. He has failed in the gold-rush and is returned to till the soil. His monologue is a farewell to his son, who is leaving for a life on the sea. It is a lyrical summary of the period of conquest, and his wife, the mother who died on the way back from the gold-rush, is alluded to in a way which implies her succession to the nature-symbolism of Pocahontas" (556). What interests us in this description is that the roles assigned to the father and mother in "Indiana" as it was conceived in 1927 are reversed in the published version of 1930. In its completed form "Indiana" is the monologue not of a father but of a mother: it is the wife of the Indiana farmer who bids farewell to her son as he leaves for a life on the sea. Conversely, the parent who died on the way back from the gold rush was the father. In the letter to Kahn, Crane describes "Indiana" as "well-nigh done," saying it only lacks "the final words" (356). Yet, two years later, in September 1929, Crane wrote to Caresse Crosby, whose Black Sun Press published the limited edition of *The Bridge,* that "Indiana" was still unfinished and that he intended to send her the completed version by October (629). The question, then, is what happened during the two-year period between Crane's description of "Indiana" to Kahn and the poem's ultimate completion to cause this reversal in the roles originally projected for the father and mother.

We know that the single most important event in Crane's personal life during this period was the definitive break he made with his mother in the spring of 1928 and the subsequent reversal in his long-standing relationships with his parents. Since at least late adolescence Crane had been close to his mother, who, seeing her own artistic temperament reborn in her son, encouraged his poetic career, and he had been either at odds with or openly estranged from his father, for whom success in business was an ideal inherited from his own father that he had tried to pass on to his son, an ideal in relation to which Hart could never be anything but a failure. When Grace and Clarence Crane's marriage began to fall apart, their son became both a prize to be won and a weapon to be wielded in the battle between them. Crane's alliance with his mother lasted from the time of his parents' divorce in 1917 until the early months of 1928, even though his precarious finances still required that he remain on civil terms with Clarence (or C. A. as he was called), to whom he periodically applied for loans.

In early 1928 Crane and his mother were both living in Los Angeles.

Hart was acting as secretary and companion to Herbert Wise, and Grace was staying with her ailing mother in a bungalow in Hollywood. In February, Hart, perhaps in response to Grace's requests that he introduce her to his Hollywood friends or fearing that she might hear of his escapades, told his mother that he was a homosexual. There are conflicting reports about Grace's immediate reaction to the news, but Crane told a friend that she was "visibly upset" and that "for days afterward she seemed to him cold and contemptuous" (Unterecker 534). Whatever the truth, the disclosure of his homosexuality placed an enormous strain on their relationship, a strain that was soon compounded when, after quitting his job with Wise at the end of February, Crane moved in with his mother and grandmother in mid-March. His grandmother was dying, and Hart spent part of each day serving as her nurse and companion, while at the same time coping with his mother's own "nervous collapse." For the next two months the relationship between Hart and Grace steadily worsened. Unterecker describes Crane's

> growing conviction that his mother's love for him had degenerated into a brutal possessiveness . . . Not only did he discover that Grace was jealous of his love for his grandmother; he also discovered—recalling his past—a lifelong pattern of jealousy: Grace "guarding" him from any deep affection for his father, for his other relatives, for the girls whom, in a more conventional boyhood, he might have come to love . . . She would never voluntarily, he felt, allow him to love anyone other than her; nor, he was sure, would she ever allow him a life substantially independent of her. (Unterecker 540)

By the end of May, Crane was desperate to leave, and after packing surreptitiously for a week, he stole away from the bungalow in the dead of night, heading for New York, never to see his mother again. If, as Emerson says, poets write with actions as well as words, then the route that Crane chose in leaving his mother to return east was a symbolic statement whose gloss is to be found in *The Bridge*. After traveling by train from Los Angeles to New Orleans, he continued by ship through the Gulf and up the East coast to New York. In a letter dated June 14, 1928, written to his father after his return, he gave some indication of the significance of this journey in his description of a day he spent in New Orleans: "The boat ride down the delta of the Mississippi (we were from 10 till 5 p.m. completing it) was one of the great days of my life. It was a place I had so often imagined and, as you know, written about in my River section of *The Bridge*. There is something tragically beautiful about the scene, the great, magnificent Father of Waters pouring itself at last into the oblivion of the Gulf!" (590). In recounting his boat ride on "the great, magnificent Father of Waters" to his own father, Crane evokes this transitional place he "had so often imagined," this threshold where the seminal river pours itself into the oblivion of the Gulf, as a "tragically beautiful . . . scene"—a primal scene in an Oedipal tragedy.

Pausing in New Orleans at midcontinent, midway in his flight from his mother, Crane recalled the "River section of *The Bridge*" and may have

sensed even then that his eastward flight would turn out to be a circular journey like all those in *The Bridge,* a journey whose turnings would finally bring him back to the oblivion of the Gulf four years later. The last message Crane sent his mother was "a cryptic postcard from Paris" in early 1929, "scrawled with an obviously drunken hand, which wildly mentioned a flight into the Orient and bore the strangely prophetic signature, 'Atlantis,' and the hieroglyph of a five-pointed star" (Horton 251).

In spite of periodic setbacks, Hart's relationship with his father improved steadily after his break with Grace. Hart's new sense of how his mother had turned him against his father was matched by a new willingness on Clarence Crane's part to admit that his own life was no model for his son's. In July 1928, the elder Crane wrote Hart:

> You and I agree now as never before that your father has made a failure of his life because he has paid too much attention to hard work and not enough to play. I have been too ambitious for things that really did not amount to anything at all . . . It was born in my father to be saving and energetic. All of my younger life he kept me at it until I got the same impression of things . . . so I kept at it and at it . . . Now, I don't want you to do this way, for I have lived to see the folly of it all . . . I think you write well, and unquestionably have better than an average ability for it, but no business is any good unless it pays a dividend and if writing does not pay a dividend then you have to do something else . . . I cannot tell you what to do. On that subject my advice has been all wrong for many years. (Lewis, *Letters* 627–28)

But while Crane grew closer to his father, he became increasingly hostile toward his mother, until the one he had always loved best came to seem his nemesis. Unterecker describes the elaborate precautions Crane took during the rest of his life to keep his mother from learning of his whereabouts:

> Each flight—prompted always by terror that she might persuade him to return—led to an orgy of drunken escape and complex moves from place to place as, swearing friends to secrecy, he attempted to cover his trail . . . Driven by this storm of feeling, he first fled to New York, soon after to Europe, and finally to Mexico. But no matter where he went, he found himself pursued by her letters and by memories that would not let him rest. So long as she lived, he felt, she would continue to hunt him down. (Unterecker 542)

In February 1929, Crane wrote to his friends the Rychtariks from Paris, "My mother has made it impossible for me to live in my own country" (611).

That Crane understood what was involved psychologically in his mother's obsessive attachment is clear from a letter he wrote to Grace's sister-in-law Zell in the late fall of 1928: Grace "is profoundly attached to me, really loves me, I know. But there are mixtures of elements in this attachment that are neither good for her nor for me. Psychoanalysis reveals many things that it would be well for Grace to know" (Unterecker 565). Later, he adds, "I won't be dragged into hell—and live there forever for anybody's

joke—not even my mother's. That is, not unless the hold is already too strong on my unconscious emotional nature, for hope of escape,—which remains to be proved. If she continues with her present methods she may drive me to drastic methods of isolation" (Unterecker 565). Crane's references to psychoanalysis and to his "unconscious emotional nature" reflect, as we noted, the knowledge of psychoanalytic theory he had acquired from his conversations with Solomon Grunberg during the fall of 1928. According to Unterecker, in October and November of that year "Hart worried incessantly about his relationship to his mother and father, Grunberg said; and, once, on one of their meanderings, Hart talked about the nightmares he had been having, nightmares that made insomnia preferable to sleep" (Unterecker 566). Unterecker records two of the dreams that Crane recounted to Grunberg; these not only shed light on Crane's relationship with his parents but also suggest how his differing attitudes toward his father and mother affected his imagining of the primal scene of origin in *The Bridge*.

Before examining these two dreams in some detail, we should note that Crane's knowledge of psychoanalysis tends to give a dual focus to a psychoanalytic reading of his poetry by raising the possibility that he consciously introduced psychoanalytic structures into his poem to shape the biographical material. (Indeed, in a 1926 letter to Yvor Winters, Crane listed "a number of things" that the first draft of "Atlantis" contained, among them "aeronautics, telegraphy, psychoanalysis" [539].) As a result, a psychoanalytic reading of *The Bridge* inevitably becomes an exercise in the history of ideas as well, which is to say, becomes by implication a study of the influence of psychoanalysis on the work of an American poet of the 1920s. In what follows, the analysis moves back and forth across three Cranian "texts" that, in their bearing on the poet's relationship with his parents, exhibit a revealing structural continuity—a poetic text (*The Bridge*), a biographical text (Crane's life as reflected in his letters and biographies), and a dream text (the two nightmares which Crane recounted to Grunberg that Unterecker records). Though the poetic and the dream texts both involve the encryption of personal material, the level of encryption (the force of repression) is obviously greater in the poetry than in the dreams, for not only was the poetic text certain to be seen by Crane's parents but, to judge from the letters to his father and mother citing salient passages from the poem, it was to be actively called to their attention as part of what seems like an oblique form of self-revelation, a veiled exhibition of his deepest feelings about his parents (his personal origin).

The first of Crane's two nightmares, according to Unterecker,

> seemed to Grunberg clearly about Hart's father and about Hart's own sense of inferiority. Grunberg said he was sure Hart was well aware of its symbolic content. It involved a river, Hart told him. Hart had somehow gotten into a little boat—a rowboat or a canoe—and was floating down the center of the river. He could see the shores on either side and far in the distance he could hear a waterfall. Though his boat floated along very peacefully, he began to

> worry as the noise of the waterfall got louder. Finally he became frightened. The boat had picked up speed. As it was swept closer and closer to the waterfall, he suddenly saw, standing on the shore just above the falls, an enormous naked Negro. Hart could not keep his eyes off the Negro's huge penis. Even though the noise of the falls was deafening and he was thoroughly frightened, he kept watching. Suddenly he realized that he was naked, too. The boat was at the very brink of the falls now and he felt himself covered with shame. His own penis was tiny, he knew, as tiny as a baby's, and he forced himself to look at it. (Unterecker 566–67)

The resonances of this dream both in Crane's personal life and in his poetry are extensive and complex. Grunberg was undoubtedly correct in thinking that the dream was "about Hart's father and about Hart's own sense of inferiority," with Crane's unconscious employing the stereotype of black sexual prowess and phallic endowment to symbolically represent the father's superiority. Yet we should avoid reading the dream figure of the black man as simply an image of Crane's father. He is that, but he is a great deal more. Keep in mind that it was less than six months prior to this dream that Hart, in describing his boat ride on "the great, magnificent Father of Waters" to the elder Crane, pointed out that he had previously depicted this "tragically beautiful . . . scene" of the Mississippi "pouring itself . . . into the oblivion of the Gulf" in the "River section of The Bridge." The relevant part of "The River"—both to Crane's real boat ride down the Mississippi Delta and to his nightmare boat ride past the naked black man on the bank—seems clear. As the body of the hobo Dan Midland (apparently killed in a confrontation with the sinister "Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority") is floating down the Mississippi, Crane describes the river's progress in terms that prefigure his dream: "sliding prone / Like one whose eyes were buried long ago // The River, spreading, flows—and spends your dream. / What are you, lost within this tideless spell? / You are your father's father, and the stream— / A liquid theme that floating niggers swell" (44). The river's black "basalt surface drags a jungle grace . . . in lengthening might" until "No embrace opens but the stinging sea; / The River lifts itself from its long bed, . . . its one will—flow! / —The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow, / Meeting the Gulf" (44–45).

That passion is the subject of these lines seems certain; indeed, they could be said to represent a double dream of passion consistent with a double identification with father and mother. At the climax, the male Father of Waters "lifts itself from its long bed" to pour into the female Gulf. (Crane had enclosed an earlier version of these seven stanzas in a letter to his mother dated June 18, 1927, saying that he hoped she would "enjoy the epic sweep of the thing—like a great river of time that takes everything and pours it into a great abyss" (547). But prior to this union of male and female, there is a union of male and male as the quester, imaginatively identified with Dan Midland's corpse, enters the Father of Waters. (This same structure—a union, an imaginative identification, of male and male preceding a union of male and female—governs the quester's subsequent participa-

tion in the sacred marriage of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, to which "The River" leads.) One of the obvious similarities between Crane's description of the quester's entrance into the Father of Waters and his own nightmare of a boat ride downriver is that the river in each case is associated with the figure of a black man. In the poem the Mississippi is described as "a liquid theme that floating niggers swell," while in the dream Crane sees on the riverbank a naked black man with a "huge penis." Indeed, the image of a huge penis seems to be implicit in the passage from the poem as well: the floating blacks "swell" the paternal stream in its "lengthening might" as it moves toward the climactic union with the Gulf. The association of the muddy, brown Mississippi with the figure of a powerful black man is easily understood, and Crane would have found a particularly striking example of this association in a popular Broadway musical of the day.

Show Boat had opened in New York on December 27, 1927, and one of the high points of the musical was the song "Ol' Man River." (The Mississippi had, of course, been much in the news during the spring and summer of 1927 as *Show Boat* was being readied for Broadway. Its spring flood had been one of the worst in modern times, making that year memorable in the lore of the river. One recalls the opening of "The Old Man" section of Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*: "Once (it was in Mississippi in May in the flood year 1927) . . . " [23]. And, of course, hymning the Mississippi was nothing new for American music in the 1920s. In 1925, for example, Ferde Grofé's *Mississippi Suite,* whose first movement was titled "The Father of Waters" and whose fourth movement contained one of the most beautiful melodies of the era, had received its first performance. Not to mention such popular songs of the period as "Mississippi Mud" and "Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On." Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II had written "Ol' Man River" with Crane's friend the black singer and actor Paul Robeson in mind. The show's producer, Florenz Ziegfeld, had announced the signing of Robeson for the role of Joe as early as December 1926, but because of delays in getting *Show Boat* into rehearsal, Robeson accepted other engagements and as a result did not appear in the New York production (Bordman 267–77 and 299), though he recorded "Ol' Man River" for Victor Records on March 1, 1928 (Rust 552), with Paul Whiteman's Concert Orchestra and starred in the London production of *Show Boat* which opened in early May 1928. Charles Morgan, commenting on Robeson's version of "Ol' Man River" in the *New York Times* on May 27, 1928, predicted that his "hymning of the Mississippi" was sure to "become popular." "Ol' Man River" became identified with Robeson, and in turn Robeson's image as the archetypal noble black man of the 1920s struggling against the white man's oppressive paternalism became associated with the song.

Crane's nightmare about the enormous naked black man on the river bank occurred in October or November 1928, and on November 30, 1928, Crane's friend Herbert Wise took him to see a performance of *Show Boat* in New York (603), though Crane had undoubtedly heard the record of "Ol' Man River" and knew of its dramatic context long before this. In late December, Crane saw *Show Boat* again in London, visited Robeson back-

stage, and later spent time with Robeson and his wife in their London home (605). Crane had first met Robeson in 1924 when the actor starred in Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings,* a play "about a negro who marries a white woman" as Crane wrote his mother in March 1924 (Lewis, *Letters* 287). To judge from another letter to his mother two months later, the black singer had assumed heroic stature for Crane: "Robeson is one of the most superb sort of people. Very black, a deep resonance to his voice and actor eyes. Phi Beta Kappa, half-back on Walter Camps all-star eleven, and a very fine mind and nature" (389).[1]

Given the popular practice of evoking the Father of Waters as a powerful black man, it requires no great imaginative leap to read the black man by the river in Crane's nightmare as an encrypted image of Crane's father, which is to say, as an image of the threatening aspect of the father. Moreover, since the dream seems to express Crane's repressed desire for conjunction (identification) with the father, this imaging of the object of desire as a black man suggests that recurring structure of homoerotic relationships in American literature in which racial heterogeneity substitutes for gender heterogeneity as a principle of difference in pair bonding. One thinks of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, Pym and Dirk Peters, Ishmael and Queequeg, to name a few—the white man and his dark-skinned companion (whether black, Indian, mulatto, or half-breed). Indeed, the scenario of Crane's nightmare may owe something to the final scene in Poe's *Pym,* in which Pym and the half-breed Peters, approaching the polar abyss in a canoe that is caught in a powerful current, encounter an enormous white figure in their path. And it certainly owes something to Huck and Jim's raft trip down the Mississippi in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Yet to understand the full significance of the figure in Crane's dream, we must consider a crucial passage from his life in which he apparently felt that his father had treated him like a black man. In January 1920, Hart, honoring his father's wish that he enter the family business, went to work for the Crane Chocolate Company in Cleveland and remained in his father's employ for the next fourteen months. Near the end of February 1921, the elder Crane assigned Hart to supervise a basement storeroom in a Cleveland restaurant the company owned. Unterecker describes the surroundings:

> Across a basement corridor from him were the restaurant kitchens, where Hart delighted in the relaxed, free, good times of the Negro cooks and dishwashers. Grace, when Hart wrote her of his transfer, felt that C.A.'s assigning Hart to this job in this place—particularly because Hart had replaced a discharged Negro handyman—was a deliberate effort to humiliate son and mother; but Hart, lacking Grace's prejudices, managed to thrive on the underground life. For the first time in months he set to work on a poem and in the leisure of his storeroom turned out the first drafts of "Black Tambourine," a study of the store's porter, who, "forlorn in the cellar," seemed caught between two unavailable worlds: lost Africa nothing more than racial memory, and the white, smiling world of the restaurant upstairs barred to him by "the world's closed door." (Unterecker 188)

Commenting on the poem in a letter to Gorham Munson, Crane says that "in the popular mind" the Negro has been "sentimentally or brutally 'placed'" in a "midkingdom . . . somewhere between man and beast" (249). Crane introduces the figure of Aesop into the poem not only to evoke through Aesop's animal fables this world midway "between man and beast" but also to suggest the way in which the slave Aesop transfigured and thus redeemed the condition of slavery, in which men are treated like animals, by the poetic art of fables in which animals behave like men: "Aesop, driven to pondering, found / Heaven with the tortoise and the hare; / Fox brush and sow ear top his grave / And mingling incantations on the air" (4).

On the morning of April 19, 1921, Crane's father paid a surprise visit to the restaurant where his son worked. Hart had left the storeroom and was having a late breakfast with his black friends in the kitchen. As Unterecker recounts it, "their jokes and stories filled the big kitchen with good-natured laughter, and none of them saw Hart's father descend the basement stairs." The elder Crane

> reprimanded Hart, ordered him to return to the storeroom, and, as Hart turned to go, added that since Hart was again living with his mother, he could eat his meals with her, too. Hart interpreted the remark as an attack both on himself and on Grace. He whirled to face his father, threw the storeroom keys on the floor, and, in front of the other help, yelled that he was through with C. A. for good. C. A., by now as angry as his son, turned white with rage, shouting that if Hart didn't apologize he would be disinherited. Hart climaxed the scene by screaming curses on his father and his father's money and rushing blindly from the store. (Unterecker 198)

The following day Crane wrote to Gorham Munson that he had quit his father's employ for good, after having "been treated like a dog now for two years" (246). And later he complained that he had "thrown away" two years "at the feet" of his father performing "peon duties" (Unterecker 200). In view of Crane's evocation of the black's midkingdom "somewhere between man and beast" in "Black Tambourine," it seems clear that Crane felt his father had kept him in economic slavery, had treated the poet (Aesop) "like a dog" by placing him among, and equating him with, the descendants of black slaves who depended upon the elder Crane's paternalism.

This early equation of the images of son, poet, slave, and black man in Crane's mind helps to explain the later association in "The River" of the poetic quester and the blacks as singers. In the passage that immediately precedes the quester's imagined descent into the Father of Waters, Crane evokes the image of the Mississippi in the context of a black spiritual: "Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down, / As though you touched hands with some ancient clown, / —A little while gaze absently below / And hum *Deep River* with them while they go" (44). The opening line of "Deep River" ("Deep river, my heart lies over Jordan") is echoed a few lines later in the description of those who, feeding the river timelessly, "win no frontier by their wayward plight, / But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's

brow" (44). (The Mississippi and the Jordan are also associated in the verse of "Ol' Man River": the black man says, "Let me go 'way from de Mississippi, / Let me go 'way from de white men boss, / Show me dat stream called de river Jordan, / Dat's de ol' stream dat I long to cross.") It is worth noting that Paul Robeson recorded "Deep River" for Victor Records on May 10, 1927 (Rust 552), and that Crane, though he began jotting down lines for "The River" as early as July 1926, wrote the bulk of the poem in mid-June 1927 (Unterecker 490). We should also recall that according to an early outline of *The Bridge,* which he included in a letter to Otto Kahn dated March 18, 1926, Crane planned to make the dramatic speaker of one section of the poem a "Negro porter" on the "Calgary Express . . . singing to himself (a jazz form for this) of his sweetheart and the death of John Brown alternately" (441). The section, which was intended to take "in the whole racial history of the Negro in America" (Weber, *Hart* 261), as Crane noted in a synopsis, was never written, but traces of it can perhaps be seen in "The River" with its reference to "Pullman breakfasters" (43) and its image of someone leaning from the train to hum "Deep River."

At any rate, the association of the Mississippi with the song of a black singer is clearly present in the poem even before the crucial stanza in which river, song, and singer merge, as, "lost within this tideless spell," you become "your father's father, and the stream— / A liquid theme that floating niggers swell." The river is an unending stream of song, a "tideless spell," which is to say, a timeless (magical) spell (incantation, verse, charm [Latin: *carmina,* song]), in which the quester immerses himself and to which he joins his own song. And what the river song is to the black singer, the bridge song is to the quester, as Crane makes clear when he echoes this passage from "The River" in the concluding "Atlantis" section: having addressed the symbolic bridge of the poem as "O River-throated," the quester exhorts his poetic vision, "Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!" (74). As the "liquid theme" of the river holds the "floating niggers," so the visionary submerged continent, the mythic land bridge between East and West, is meant to hold the "floating singer."

Significantly, the words *niggers* and *singer* are anagrams of one another (in anagrams a doubled letter can count as one or two, hence the doubling of *g* in the former word equates with the single *g* in the latter), an encrypted association that Crane, who describes in "O Carib Isle!" how the temporal erosions of nature "shift, subvert, / And anagrammatize your name" (77), clearly intended. (Playing anagrams was a favorite parlor game among the Cranes when Hart was a child.) And this anagram, this hidden equation of names, expresses Crane's sense (dating from at least the time of "Black Tambourine") that for white, paternal, commercial America the "singer" (poet) is a "nigger" (slave). The "niggers" and the "singer" are both described as "floating" not only because they expect, in trusting themselves to their songs as a swimmer trusts himself to the water, to be buoyed up and sustained by the creative stream but also because blacks and poets in Crane's day were considered by commercial America to be economically

unstable, to be floaters or drifters. And it is in this regard that the "niggers" and the "singer" are associated with the hoboes in "The River," who are in turn presented as singers: "Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist / Of unwalled winds they offer, singing low / *My Old Kentucky Home* and *Casey Jones,* / *Some Sunny Day*. I heard a road-gang chanting so"(42).

What these associations ultimately suggest is the extent to which Crane in his self-embraced role of son-poet-slave identified himself with the blacks and thus the extent to which the figure of the naked black man in the dream is not just an image of Crane's father but of Crane as well. Indeed, I would suggest that the black man in Crane's dream is the son's idealized image of the union of father and son, a figure that combines in one person the powerful Father of Waters and the floating black singer, the paternal master and the filial poet-slave. If the black is a dual figure who represents the son's idealized attempt to assume the father's power and authority without directly combating the father (a combat that would involve the son's risking either his own destruction or the destruction of the paternal authority to recognize and acknowledge), then we can understand why, in describing the quester's union with the Father of Waters, Crane says that, "lost within this tideless spell," you become not your father but "your father's father"; for if the father is himself a son (as this image of the "father's father" implies), if he is not his own origin but merely a predecessor caught in the same generational series in which the son finds himself, then a paternal authority based on the father's temporal priority to the son is thereby shown to be circumscribed: Father Time is represented as being encompassed (circularized) by the timeless (m)other. And it is this timeless mother, the muse, who, through her power to circularize time, can confer generational earliness, paternal authority, originality through the tideless spell of song.

The image of poetic song as a phallic activity is, of course, fairly common in the work of one of Crane's major influences, Whitman. One thinks of such poems as "From Pent-Up Aching Rivers," with its image of the poet's "voice resonant, singing the phallus" (Whitman 69), or "Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals" in which Whitman, the "chanter of Adamic songs," describes himself as "lusty, phallic, with potent original loins" and his poems as the "Offspring of my loins" (Whitman 80–81). What Crane called "the phallic theme" (229) in a 1920 letter to Matthew Josephson informs his own best poetry, and whether this theme appears in a poem memorializing a homosexual love affair, as in "Voyages," or a heterosexual one, as in "The Broken Tower," it inevitably ends by affirming that the true seminal act for Crane, the authentic phallic activity, is the creation of poetry. Which is to say that it culminates in Crane's refusal to treat the poetic sublime as mere sexual sublimation.

Crane's sense of the phallic character of poetry gives an added significance to the nightmare image of the black man with the huge penis, for to the extent that this figure is the son's image of an idealized union of father and son, he is also a symbol of phallic song, an image of the Father of

Waters transformed into a stream of song that flows from the black singer-slave-son. The black man represents, then, the son's ideal of a recognition by, and equality with, the father that is achieved by means of poetry, the ideal of a paternal authority that the son assumes precisely by translating the sense of "authorship" from a sexual (combative) to a poetic register. The black man is the apotheosis not of combative action but of enduring patience: As the muddy brown Mississippi moves "in lengthening might" inexorably toward the Gulf, the quester exclaims, "Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!" It is this same patience (from the Latin *pati,* suffering) that in "Quaker Hill" Crane praises as the special virtue of the female artists Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan, evoking it in the image of a song "transmuting silence with that stilly note / Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew!" a song that, like the self-flagellating cry of the "whip-poor-will . . . breaks the heart, yet yields / That patience that is armour and that shields / Love from despair—when love foresees the end" (66).

The phallic poem whose public exhibition Crane expected to establish his maturity was, of course, *The Bridge,* and in this regard we can see an additional reason for the anxiety Crane experienced in his dream. Beyond his ambivalent feelings about his father and his sexual anxiety faced with the "enormous" figure who represents the union of father and son, there is (if we consider the black man as a symbol of the phallic song whose appearance will establish the son's authority) the added fear that he may not be adequate to the task of completing his epic or that, if he does, it will turn out to be a minor work. What we have described in Crane's nightmare as a scene of self-recognition could just as accurately be described as a scene of self-exhibition: The river bearing his small boat, besides being a seminal fluid and a stream of song, is a river of time, and the waterfall toward which the boat is being carried by the swift current, for all that it seems to represent the climax of an erotic dream, symbolizes as well that climactic moment when he must exhibit the phallic poem he has labored on for so long. As we know from Crane's correspondence during the years he worked on *The Bridge* and particularly from 1928 on, his fear, as expressed in the imagery of the dream, was that the phallic poem would not be "huge" like the black man's penis but one that was "tiny as a baby's," that, poised "at the very brink of the falls" (a place analogous to the Mississippi Delta where the Father of Waters pours itself into the female Gulf), Crane would find himself "covered with shame" because he was not poet enough for the muse-mother.

§ 9
Crane's Dream of His Mother's Trunk in the Attic

In contrast to the dream in which the father appears in the symbolic form of a black man, the other nightmare of Crane's that Unterecker records is explicitly about Crane's mother. The dream was so vivid, Unterecker notes, that Crane

Waters transformed into a stream of song that flows from the black singer-slave-son. The black man represents, then, the son's ideal of a recognition by, and equality with, the father that is achieved by means of poetry, the ideal of a paternal authority that the son assumes precisely by translating the sense of "authorship" from a sexual (combative) to a poetic register. The black man is the apotheosis not of combative action but of enduring patience: As the muddy brown Mississippi moves "in lengthening might" inexorably toward the Gulf, the quester exclaims, "Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!" It is this same patience (from the Latin *pati,* suffering) that in "Quaker Hill" Crane praises as the special virtue of the female artists Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan, evoking it in the image of a song "transmuting silence with that stilly note / Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew!" a song that, like the self-flagellating cry of the "whip-poor-will . . . breaks the heart, yet yields / That patience that is armour and that shields / Love from despair—when love foresees the end" (66).

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had the feeling, long after he was awake, that it was something he had actually experienced. He had gone to bed exhausted, and when he woke up, he was in his old room on 115th Street. He got up, remembering that he had to hunt for something in the attic, and as he stumbled through the dusty attic—half awake—he kept trying to remember what he was looking for. Whatever it was, it was in a trunk. He was sure of that. It was very dark in the attic, but when he found the trunk, there was enough light for him to see that it was full of his mother's clothes. He started rummaging through them, looking for whatever it was he was looking for, pulling out dresses, shoes, stockings, underclothing. But the trunk was so full, it seemed he would never find what he was after. There was so much to look at that when he found the hand, he hardly realized it was a human hand; but when he found another hand and a piece of an arm, he knew there was a body in the trunk. He kept pulling out piece after piece of it, all mixed in with the clothing. The clothing was covered with blood. It was not until he had almost emptied the trunk that he realized he was unpacking the dismembered body of his mother. (Unterecker 567)

The dream appears to express, in a series of redundant symbols, the son's desire for a total return to the womb, indeed express that desire with a vengeance in its symbolic reduction of the mother's body to a trunk (a torso) that contains a body that has in turn been violently reduced in order to fit into this container. Awakening from an exhausted sleep, with its suggestion of the amniotic state, Crane finds himself in "his old room" (evocative of the unborn infant's original dwelling place) at his maternal grandparents' house on East 115th Street in Cleveland. As an adult, Crane always thought of the house on 115th Street, where he lived from the ages of eight to seventeen, as his family home, and he referred to his bedroom in the north tower of the old Victorian structure as his "ivory tower" (Unterecker 21) and his "sanctum de la tour" (Unterecker, photo following p. 48). In a July 1923 letter to Charlotte Rychtarik, Crane reminisced,

> When I think of that room, it is almost to give way to tears, because I shall never find my way back to it. It is not necessary, of course, that I should, but just the same it was the center and beginning of all that I am and ever will be, the center of such pain as would tear me to pieces to tell you about, and equally the center of great joys! *The Bridge* seems to me so beautiful—and it was there that I first thought about it, and it was there that I wrote "Faustus and Helen" . . . And all this is, of course, connected very intimately with my Mother, my beautiful mother whom I am so glad you love and speak about. (342–43)

This dream of the son's return to the home of his mother's mother resembles the structure we noted in "The River," in which the quester, entering the river of time that leads back to the oblivion of the Gulf, becomes his father's father. The son attempts to circumvent his parents' generation and its conflicts between mother and father and between parent and child by identifying himself with his grandparents' generation, that prior authority to which his parents were subject, the doting grandparents who are the grandchild's natural ally and his court of higher appeal. In the lyric "My

Grandmother's Love Letters" (1920), Crane memorialized his maternal grandmother Elizabeth Belden Hart in a scenario that anticipates details of his dream. On a rainy night the poet sits in an attic reading

> the letters of my mother's mother,
> Elizabeth,
> That have been pressed so long
> Into a corner of the roof
> That they are brown and soft
> And liable to melt as snow. (5)

(Had the letters been kept in a trunk in the attic?)

As he reads these letters that seem as fragile as the snows of yesteryear, the poet attempts to journey back through his grandparents' written memories to the world before his birth: Looking at this intimate exchange of correspondence, this written intercourse between his grandmother and grandfather, the poet seems to be imaginatively present at a scene of origin which is, if not more primal than, certainly prior to, that of parental intercourse and clearly more comforting to the poet since these letters attest to a love between his grandparents that Crane had begun to feel was originally absent between his own parents, an original absence that seemed to call into question his personal origin. Around the same time that Crane was writing "My Grandmother's Love Letters," he was working on another poem that he described in an April 1920 letter to Gorham Munson as "a new piece in conventional form about a child hearing his parents quarreling in the next room at midnight" (231–32), a scenario that suggests the situation that Freud thought was the most common occasion of the fantasy of the primal scene—the child overhearing the sounds of his parents' lovemaking at night (often misunderstood by the child as being the sounds of violence), though in Crane's version it is a scene of hatred rather than love.

In the closing lines of "My Grandmother's Love Letters," the same question is posed that will later concern Crane in those sections of *The Bridge* immediately following the primal scene of origin in "The Dance": whether, if one were able to journey back imaginatively to the origin, one could then return to the present with that vision of origin intact. The poet asks himself,

> "Are your fingers long enough to play
> Old keys that are but echoes:
> Is the silence strong enough
> To carry back the music to its source
> And back to you again
> As though to her?"
>
> Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
> Through much of what she would not understand;
> And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof
> With such a sound of gently pitying laughter. (5)

The image that evokes the return to origin—carrying "back the music to its source"—suggests the stream of song flowing to the Gulf at the end of "The River"—origin and end, source and abyss coinciding in this circular journey.[1]

Besides reflecting Crane's hostility toward his mother at this period, the dream evokes as well the sadistic form of the fantasy of total reincorporation. Recall that the mother's body, though it is the object of desire in the fantasy of a total return, is also perceived by the son as an obstacle to the fantasy's fulfillment precisely because it cannot physically contain the full-grown son as it once did the fetus. As "The Dance" evokes the masochistic form of the womb fantasy, in which the son's body is violently reduced in size (to a sperm-like liquid) in order to be wholly incorporated into the mother, so Crane's nightmare represents the other extreme in which the mother's body is violently torn apart either to force an entry or in frustration at the body's resistance to the desired return. Given Rank's observation that the return to the womb is most often symbolized by its opposite (an image of birth), we should no doubt read Crane's unpacking of the trunk as expressing his desire to put himself into the trunk.

It is significant that in the months immediately preceding this dream of finding his mother's dismembered body in a trunk Crane was much concerned with establishing a home of his own. His childhood home on 115th Street in Cleveland (the setting of the dream) had been sold in 1925, and his break with his mother three years later seems to have reawakened and intensified his feelings of homelessness. In early July 1928—some two weeks after his letter describing the boat ride on the "great, magnificent Father of Waters"—Crane wrote his father again, asking for a loan to buy a small farmhouse near Patterson, New York, where he was then living, and offering as collateral the $5,000 bequest from his maternal grandfather that was being held in trust for him until his grandmother's death. Clarence Crane replied that business difficulties made it impossible for him to advance Hart the money at that time. By the end of the month Hart wrote his father that he hadn't "enough cash to even get into New York" and that "at present I haven't a place to lay my head": "I've never felt quite as humiliated. I can't ask you for anything more, and I'm not" (Lewis, *Letters* 626–27).

Six weeks later, however, Crane's maternal grandmother died, and, suddenly, with his financial worries temporarily at an end, it seemed that he would be able to have a place of his own. But at this point his mother intervened. Trying to coerce Hart into returning to California for a reconciliation, Grace refused to sign the papers needed by the bank to release the $5,000 legacy. In November Crane sent his mother a telegram threatening her with legal action. Grace replied by telegram that she had signed the papers but threatened in turn to ask Hart's father "to use his influence with the bank against paying him his inheritance on the grounds of his drinking habits" (Horton 249–50). Interpreting this as a veiled threat to tell his father about his homosexuality, Hart used his inheritance to leave immediately for Europe, feeling that his mother not only had tried to keep

him from having a home of his own but also, as he wrote his friends the Rychtariks, had made it impossible for him to live in his own country. Crane subsequently memorialized this conflict with Grace over his grandfather's legacy in "Quaker Hill" where, faced with the sweeping historical question "Where are my kinsmen and the patriarch race?" the quester has to "Shoulder the curse of sundered parentage, / Wait for the postman driving from Birch Hill / With birthright by blackmail, the arrant page / That unfolds a new destiny to fill" (65).

The curse of sundered parentage—in the sense both of his parents' divorce and of his break with his mother and his previous estrangement from his father—was much on Crane's mind during the months he spent writing the final sections of *The Bridge*. The condition of sundered parentage had come to seem an image of the state of the modern American suffering the effects of a spiritual divorce that had shattered an original union between man and nature represented by the pre-Columbian "nature-world." Because of that divorce, the modern American was a son estranged from the maternal body of the virgin continent, a body that, in his frustration, he violently rends in search of wealth rather than cultivating and making fruitful. This danger had been foreseen by Columbus in "Ave Maria," when he warned against a "delirium of jewels" that could exhaust the "plenitude" of the New World and leave "Isaiah counting famine on this lee!" (36).

Following immediately upon the quester's vision of the Amerindian "nature-world," "Indiana" depicts a characteristic moment in the historical disintegration of that union of man and nature: the deracinating effect that a farmer's abandoning his land to join the Colorado gold rush has had on his son who, years later, runs away to sea. The farmer, baffled in his search for gold, had died on the way back from Colorado, and the poem's dramatic speaker, the farmer's wife, tells her son the story of his origin as he prepares to leave their Indiana farm:

> And bison thunder rends my dreams no more
> As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you
> Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door . . .
> Your father knew
>
> Then, though we'd buried him behind us, far
> Back on the gold trail—then his lost bones stirred . . .
> But you who drop the scythe to grasp the oar
> Knew not, nor heard.
>
> How we, too, Prodigal, once rode off, too—
> Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye . . .
> We found God lavish there in Colorado
> But passing sly. (49)

Taking our cue from Crane's nightmare of unpacking his mother's dismembered body from a trunk, we should no doubt read this image of a son's birth that tears the mother's womb as symbolizing the desire for its opposite—a total return to the womb by means of the violent rending of

the mother's body. Certainly, all the other signs in the poem point in this direction. The mother compares the tearing of her womb to the rending of her dreams by "bison thunder," an image that recalls the thunderstorm of the preceding section in which Maquokeeta and Pocahontas are united, in effect associating the son's birth with Maquokeeta's absorption into the maternal landscape. And this association is reinforced by the balancing of the son's birth "at the prairie's door" against the father's burial on the prairie, his entrance into the womb of earth. Moreover, since the mother depicts the son's desire to leave the farm as a trait inherited from the father, the tearing of the mother's womb would also seem to be an hereditary reflection of the father's violation of the maternal landscape by gold mining.

There can be little doubt that the events of 1928—Crane's break with his mother, his flight and her pursuit through letters, his rapprochement with his father, the battle with his mother over his grandfather's legacy, and his unsuccessful attempt to buy his own home—significantly shaped "Indiana." And these events, along with the nightmares that Unterecker records and what they reveal of Crane's feelings about his father and mother during this period, shed light on Crane's most important alteration of the poem: the reversal of the roles originally planned for the father and mother in the poem as outlined in the 1927 letter to Kahn. Perhaps the best way to understand the full meaning of this reversal is to recall the standard objection critics have raised to "Indiana." From the very first reviews of *The Bridge,* this section was singled out as the weakest because of what critics felt was its extreme sentimentality. That opinion has generally persisted, supported by the knowledge that "Indiana" was one of the last sections completed and the sense that *The Bridge* was finished not out of the force of its original inspiration but under the pressure of bringing to an end a project that had gone on for seven years.

That the tone of "Indiana" is sentimental cannot be denied, but what critics have tended to ignore in attributing this tone either to a momentary failure of Crane's art or to his loss of belief in the project as a whole is that, unlike nearly all the other sections of the poem, "Indiana" is spoken not by Crane's surrogate, the poetic quester, but by another persona, and that, to judge from the other major instance of this device in the poem ("Ave Maria"), one of the purposes of these sections is to characterize their speakers by the form and quality of the poetry they are given to speak. Thus, in "Ave Maria" Columbus uses dramatic blank verse of an almost Elizabethan grandeur, while in "Indiana" the mother speaks in the mawkish quatrains of a nineteenth-century folk ballad. In each case the verse form evokes a cultural moment personified by its speaker. Crane uses a similar device in "Virginia," where, as Susan Jenkins Brown has pointed out, he parodies a popular song of the 1920s, "What Do You Do Sunday, Mary?" from the 1923 musical *Poppy* (starring W. C. Fields) to characterize "a little Five-and-Ten salesgirl-virgin letting down her hair from her Cathedral tower [the pseudo-Gothic Woolworth Building on lower Broadway]—but only for her true suitor on her free Saturday" (111). And just as "Virginia" alludes to one popular song, so "Indiana," I would suggest, evokes another, the

1917 ballad "Indiana" (perhaps better known by its first line as "Back Home Again in Indiana") with its imagery of nostalgic longing for a rural, childhood home ("The new mown hay—sends all its fragrance / From the fields I used to roam,— / When I dream about the moonlight on the Wabash, / Then I long for my Indiana home"), as if the twentieth-century ballad expressed the feelings of the runaway son grown older.

As the dark-skinned Pocahontas represents the maternal landscape in the mythical golden age of the pre-Columbian nature-world, so the white mother of "Indiana" represents that landscape in the leaden age of nineteenth-century materialism, and her farewell to her son, with its mixture of self-pity and emotional blackmail, is clearly meant to depict the beginning of the decline of that powerful maternal archetype in a land separated from its origins. It is precisely to associate the figure of the nineteenth-century white mother with that of the pre-Columbian dark (m)other Pocahontas, and thereby emphasize the disparity between the two, that "Indiana" immediately follows "The Dance." In his 1927 letter to Otto Kahn, Crane said that he planned in "Indiana" to allude to the mother "in a way which implies her succession to the nature-symbolism of Pocahontas." At the time he still thought of the poem as "a lyrical summary of the period of conquest" and still planned for its dramatic speaker to be the farmer whose wife had "died on the way back from the gold-rush" (556). When the roles of the father and mother were reversed, the mother retained her succession to the nature-symbolism of Pocahontas, but this succession was now presented in what, for American literature, has traditionally been an image of generational decline—the figure of the half-breed. Returning from the gold fields, the mother sees "passing on a stumbling jade / A homeless squaw— // Perhaps a halfbreed. On her slender back / She cradled a babe's body" (49). In a moment of maternal mirroring, the white mother holds up her own son for the squaw to see, knowing "that mere words could not have brought us nearer. / She nodded—and that smile across her shoulder / Will still endear her // As long as Jim, your father's memory, is warm" (50). One senses that the pioneer mother recognizes in the squaw's homeless wandering the same rootlessness that sent her husband to the gold fields and will send her son to sea.[2]

It seems clear that in imagining the mother in "Indiana," Crane was influenced by his feelings about his own mother—the scenario of a mother's self-pitying appeal to her son to write her from overseas and to return home before it is too late parallels Crane's own situation at the time too closely for us to doubt this. It also seems clear that the major factor in Crane's decision to reverse the roles originally planned for the father and mother in this section was his break with his mother and the reversal in his feelings toward her. Had Crane kept to his original plan for "Indiana," it would have been virtually impossible for the father as the poem's speaker to present a negative picture of his dead wife as part of his farewell to his departing son. And if much of the point of "Indiana" is the negative characterization of the white mother (who symbolizes the degraded ma-

ternal landscape of modern America), then the reversal of Crane's earliest feelings about his own mother posed the difficult task of preserving the maternal archetype in its original power while presenting the white mother as a decadent instance of it. Not uncommonly, this kind of ambivalence is handled by splitting the maternal image into a good and a bad half, each separately embodied; and the final version of "Indiana" shows the traces of such splitting. On the one hand, the structure of the poem, considered in the abstract, suggests an idealized version of the womb fantasy: the father is dead without the son's having to kill him, and the mother pleads with the son to return home. No doubt we are meant to see this structure as completing the epicycle of desire begun by "Ave Maria," the poem that leads into "Powhatan's Daughter." There, Columbus at mid-ocean prays to the Virgin Mother to grant him safe return home, while in the final poem of "Powhatan's Daughter," the mother, as if in reply to that earlier episode, pleads with her son, who is running away to sea, to "come back to Indiana." But on the other hand, it is equally clear that the pioneer mother envisions the son's return as occurring entirely on her own terms, not a return that grants the son access to original power but one that keeps him forever subservient. From the very first stanza of "Indiana," the mother tries to prevent the son's departure or at least to hasten his return by undermining the notion of original power.

During the fantasized primal scene of origin in "The Dance," the quester had entreated Maquokeeta, "Medicine-man, relent, restore— / Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!" (47), but the mother in "Indiana" begins her song by evoking the loss of that original earliness: "The morning glory, climbing the morning long / Over the lintel on its wiry vine, / Closes before the dusk, furls in its song / As I close mine" (48). The mother's story opens with an image of closure that is clearly meant to be experienced by her son as a kind of foreclosure: the glory of the morning has passed, here in the dusk there is only the fated repetition of unoriginal action. On that disabling note the mother recounts the son's personal origin (the circumstances that led up to his birth on the trail back from the gold fields), and the thrust of this account is to show her son the unoriginality of his leaving the farm to go adventuring, to show "How we, too, Prodigal, once rode off, too— / Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye." In addressing her son as "Prodigal," the mother implies that, like the son in the parable, he will return home one day defeated by his own irresponsibility and seeking parental succor, and in so doing confirm his unoriginality in the repetition of his parents' failure.

We should keep in mind that Crane was writing "Quaker Hill" with its allusion to the threatened lawsuit against his mother over his grandfather's legacy ("birthright by blackmail") at the same time that he was working on "Indiana," in which the mother tries to act as the mediatrix (or perhaps we should say executrix) of her son's birthright by telling him where he comes from, who his people are, and thus where he belongs and what belongs to him:

You were the first—before Ned and this farm,—
First born, remember—

And since then—all that's left to me of Jim
Whose folks, like mine, came out of Arrowhead.
And you're the only one with eyes like him—
Kentucky bred!

I'm standing still, I'm old, I'm half of stone!
Oh, hold me in those eyes' engaging blue;
There's where the stubborn years gleam and atone,—
Where gold is true! (50)

These lines, filled with an irony unperceived by their speaker, undercut the thing they argue for. The mother tells her son what belongs to him as the "First born," that is, she invokes on his behalf the prerogative of generational earliness, after she has just finished describing the loss of original earliness in the closing of the frontier, the loss of any possibility of being first. The promise of America, of the endless frontier, was the golden promise of an inexhaustible access to the original world. But that was not what the farmer and his wife found in Colorado in 1859 when they arrived at a mining town ("A dream called Eldorado" [The Golden]) that had "no charter but a promised crown / Of claims to stake": "But we,—too late, too early, howsoever— / Won nothing out of fifty-nine—those years— / But gilded promise, yielded to us never, / And barren tears" (49).

Though she professes uncertainty as to whether their failure resulted from being too early or too late, everything else in the poem points to her sense of lateness. And it is consistent with her misunderstanding of her son that she apparently considers this tale of lateness, of parents' dreams foreclosed by the closing of the frontier, to be in some way an effective argument for the son's remaining on the farm rather than searching for a new frontier on the sea or in some other land.[3] In "Indiana," then, the mother in mediating a birthright that consists of an absent paternal origin, a lost earliness, functions as a kind of disabling antimuse—neither the origin herself nor the means to a lost original power. And yet it would be a mistake to paint too black a picture of her (particularly since in Crane's color coding the good mother is the dark [m]other). The pioneer woman may be foolish and possessive, but she is not intentionally evil, which is to say that Crane's portrait of her, no matter how much it may reflect his personal feelings about Grace Crane at the time, is not intended to discredit the maternal archetype. In terms of Crane's own psychic economy in writing *The Bridge,* "Indiana" serves in part to separate the image of his own mother (the white woman of modern America) from that of the Great Mother, the dark woman of the triple aspect (mother-lover-muse) whom he calls Pocahontas, the poet's true mother. What Crane objects to in the pioneer woman is not the excessive character of maternal love but rather that this mother offers her love only on her own terms, terms that, because they are ultimately self-pitying and self-regarding, reduce the son to being her mirror.

In a November 1930 letter to his friend William Wright, Crane confessed to being "considerably jolted at the charge of sentimentality continually leveled" at "Indiana." Noting that he "approved of a certain amount of sentiment," he added, "Since 'race' is the principal motivation of 'Indiana,' I can't help thinking that, observed in the proper perspective, and judged in relation to the argument or theme of the 'Pocahontas section' as a whole, the pioneer woman's maternalism isn't excessive" (654). One suspects that Crane was surprised less by the charge of sentimentality than by the fact that it was leveled at the poet rather than the persona. Yet, on the other hand, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Crane's remark about the pioneer woman's maternalism not seeming excessive within the overall context of his fantasized portrait of the muse-mother and the vision of a total return. Indeed, for the poet-son, the more intense and narrowly focused the muse's love is, the better, as long as that love is given wholly on the son's terms.

It is in light of this split in Crane's feelings about the figure of the mother that we should interpret his puzzling remark about race being "the principal motivation of 'Indiana.'" Granting that the poem's implicit comparison of the pioneer woman and Pocahontas as mother figures tends to evoke the maternal difference between them as being in some sense a racial difference, I would argue that in *The Bridge* race functions in regard to the image of the mother in much the same way that it does in relation to the image of the father in Crane's nightmare of the black man on the river bank. Which is to say that since the black and the Amerindian represented for the white America of Crane's day the world of animal nature as opposed to human culture, and since one of the traditional principles of differentiation between nature and culture, between animal and human, is the incest taboo, Crane's symbolic translation of the white father and mother into a black and an Indian, respectively, circumvents this taboo by placing the objects of desire in an original nature world where the prohibition against incest does not exist. As the black man in Crane's dream represents the fantasized incestuous union of father and son, so the Indian maiden Pocahontas in *The Bridge* represents that of mother and son. And since in each case the idealized figure is drawn from a race that was considered by white America to be subservient or inferior (a subservience that evokes for Crane the child's subjection to his parents), their use as symbols of the union of father and son and of mother and son (i.e., their elevation to the status of ideals) represents the triumph of the son: it marks these fantasized unions as occurring on the son's own terms.

Yet obviously Crane was neither a black nor an Indian, and so, as one would expect, in the very process of symbolizing his forbidden desires in these dark figures, he obliquely reaffirms the prohibition that gives those desires their significance within a differential system. Here one finds perhaps a further, not to say deeper, significance to that reversal in the roles originally planned for the father and mother in "Indiana." In 1927 when Crane was close to Grace and at odds with his father, it was his incestuous feelings for his mother that had to be repressed (the actual estrangement

from his father serving as a sufficient defense against forbidden desires in that quarter), while at the same period it was the ideal of paternal affection and esteem that had to be reaffirmed. Consequently, in the version of "Indiana" that he described to Kahn, the mother is absent from the scene (psychically cancelled by death), and the father speaks to the son, presumably to express his love. But in 1929 when Crane was no longer speaking to his mother and had become closer to his father, it was his incestuous feelings for the latter that had now to be repressed (the actual estrangement from the other parent serving once again as a sufficient defense in that quarter), while it was the ideal of maternal love that had to be reaffirmed. Thus, in the finished version of the poem, the father is absent, and the mother speaks to the son. However, in this version, though Crane projects the son's ideal of maternal love in the abstract form of the poem (i.e., in the scenario of a mother pleading with her son to return home in the father's absence), he evokes in the pioneer woman's possessiveness the real maternal love he has known.

At this point we can see that the autobiographical material Crane incorporated into the poem reflects his sense of how much this vision, indeed any vision, of a return to national origin depends for its emotional force on the concepts of fatherland and motherland, concepts whose collective force is, in one degree or another, a function of each individual's personal relationship to his parents. That patriotism ultimately derives from the way one feels about one's father, or that the love of the native land, the physical nature of the nation ("native," "nature," and "nation" are all from Latin *natus,* "to be born"), takes its basic emotional tone from the feeling for one's mother, simply means that the most powerful trope for binding individuals to a place and thus to each other has always been the parental image and that to deal with national feelings about the native land inevitably means dealing with personal feelings about one's parents. It is for this reason that Crane's complex, shifting relationship with his father and mother enters again and again into the fabric of the poem both as direct thematic motif and as indirect shaping force. Indeed, inasmuch as Crane had cast himself in the role of the prototypical twentieth-century American poet through his surrogate the quester, he had come to view his successful overbearing father—the millionaire candy manufacturer who invented the Life Saver and who considered his son's poetic career as a rejection of his own life's work in creating the patrimony of a family business—and his disabling, possessive mother, with her virulent Midwestern blend of Christian Science mysticism and Chautauqua artiness, as the prototypical parents of the modern American poet, in that they seemed to represent between them virtually every obstacle that the serious practice of poetry would have to confront in this country in the twentieth century.

§ 10
Fantasies of Return to the Womb and the Primal Scene; Three Dimensions Reduced to Two as a Sign of Body Transcendence; the Triple Archetype; Goethe's *Faust*; Plato's Cave Allegory as a Sublimated Womb Fantasy; Helen as Mother; the Influence of Williams and Nietzsche; Demeter, Korē, and the Amerindian Corn Mother

We began our extended analysis of the five sections of "Powhatan's Daughter" by illustrating how the poetic equivalent of lateral foreshadowing in painting superimposes an afterimage—in effect, casts a shadow outline—from one of the poem's sections upon an image from an adjacent section, thus building up a composite figure such as the triple archetype of virgin-mother-lover. Given the importance in *The Bridge* of both the womb fantasy and the fantasy of the primal scene, I would argue that the superimposition of images implicit in the poem's visionary-pictorial structure (and particularly in its images of the object of desire, the mother) represents an embodiment, on the level of poetic technique, of these fantasies. Which is to say that if the fantasy of a total return expresses the desire for the complete containment of one three-dimensional body within another, a desire thwarted by the passage of time that makes the child's adult body physically incompatible with such a reincorporation, then the superimposition of images—the placing of one transparent, two-dimensional (i.e., disembodied) image upon or within another—represents the sublimation, the *idea*-lization within the visual register, of this desire for reincorporation. It symbolically, not to say schematically, acts out this desire as the superpositional merging of images.

Earlier, in discussing the poem's opening section, "To Brooklyn Bridge," I suggested that Crane's description of cinemas as "panoramic sleights / With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene" was an allusion to Plato's allegory of the cave, an allusion that characterized the cinema as an inauthentic visionary medium in American life in contrast to the prophetic vision of national origin symbolized by the dawn-illuminated arc of the bridge. And it is precisely in the context of Plato's allegory, that crucial moment in the history of the Western representation of mental images, that we can understand how the poem's implicit superimposition of images is meant to constitute an *idea*-lization of the womb fantasy.

It requires little imagination to see that Plato's "subterranean cavern" (747), with its fettered inhabitants, is a figurative telluric womb, particularly since this same trope lies behind the famous passage from the *Theaetetus* in which the Socratic method of leading people from the cave of shadow images to the sunlit realm of intelligible objects is compared at length to the art of midwifery (practiced by Socrates' mother), with Socrates remarking that his art is to assist "the soul that is in travail of birth" (Plato 855). It requires, however, somewhat more imagination to see that the realm of intelligible objects (i.e., of Platonic forms considered as reified ideas) represents an intellectual transfiguration or sublimation of the womb-like cavern of

shadow images, sublimation in the sense both of a raising of something up to and beyond a threshold and of a purifying that transforms a solid body into a diaphanous substance (as in the chemical sense of subliming a solid directly to a gas without passing through the liquid state).

In the allegory of the cave, Plato figures the relationship between a three-dimensional object and its ideal form as being like that between an object and its shadow outline projected on a flat surface, a comparison that transfers to the ideal form the attributes of a shadow, of a schematic two-dimensionality associated with Euclidean plane geometry. Since a Platonic ideal form is basically an apotheosized mental image that has been translated from an individual mind into an imaginary, independent realm of absolute intelligibility, and since Plato's visual model for the relationship of a material object to its mental image is that of shadow projection, the ideal form's *bodilessness* (by which I mean its lack not of a bodily outline but of an opaque third dimension) is simply a means of imaging the *difference* between the *visible* world of objects and the *invisible* world of ideas as the *visible difference* between three dimensions and two.

In a similar manner, an ideal form's *transparency* figures its pure intelligibility, its complete openness to sight as opposed to the opacity of a material object. What Plato does in translating the model of shadow projection from the dark cave of material objects to the bright realm of intelligible ones is to reverse the priority (the causal relation) between a body and its shadow, so that an ideal form becomes more "substantial" than its material object by becoming the original from which the object derives, as if the *object* were simply the form's *material shadow.* Moreover, in its translation from the lower world to the higher, the projected shadow, considered as the visual representation of a mental image, undergoes a symbolic color change: We traditionally imagine an ideal form as not a shadowy but a luminous outline (in keeping with the imagery of intelligibility as light), literally as a glorified shadow ("glory" in the sense of an aureole or nimbus, the light about a sacred body).

The transparency of a shadow image—the fact that it does not interrupt the visibility of a surface across which it falls—usually involves a tonal color difference between the shadowed area and the surrounding surface in a figure/ground relationship. This form of transparency differs, of course, from the geometric transparency of, say, a two-dimensional line drawing of a cube. Yet whether the effect of transparency is achieved (or the idea of transparency signified) by shading or by linear perspective, its common element in both cases is the notion of two-dimensionality as a "projection" (in one sense or another) of three-dimensionality, a projection that, in eliding the solidity of a third dimension, does away with the object's opacity. And it is this quality of being wholly present to sight, when read in a differential opposition with the partial presence to sight of a three-dimensional object (which always keeps part of itself hidden from our gaze), that functions as a signifier of pure intelligibility. What should be reemphasized here is that in Plato's allegory of the cave the relationship of a three-dimensional object to its shadow image (as staged within the context of a sublimated

womb fantasy and thus a sublimated fantasy of the primal scene, with its sense of an unlimited seeing by an unseen observer) codes the movement from the three-dimensional to the two-dimensional as a transcendence of bodily limitations, a transcendence whose visual sign is the resultant transparency that permits the superimposition of images to function as a figure for the interpenetration of bodies.

Crane was an avid and imaginative reader of Plato, and it seems unlikely he would have failed to grasp the sublimated womb fantasy represented by the allegory, particularly since he had also read Goethe's *Faust,* where the maternal character of the Platonic realm of ideal forms is made explicit in Goethe's realm of the Mothers. In a letter from July 1922, Crane compares Joyce's *Ulysses,* which he was then reading, to Goethe's *Faust*, saying that Joyce's "epic" was as great as Goethe's, "to which it has a distant resemblance in many ways" (286). Just when Crane first read *Faust* is difficult to say, but he had begun work on "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" in May 1922, and the second part of *Faust* is one of that poem's principal allusive backgrounds.

Goethe's realm of the Mothers is described in Act I of the second part of *Faust*. Impressed by Faust's magical powers, the Emperor commands him to conjure up the shades of Paris and Helen so he may "see the forms distinct and real" of "man and woman in their true ideal." Faust seeks Mephistopheles's help, but Mephistopheles says that since he is a Christian devil, he has no power to summon spirits from the classical underworld and that to accomplish this Faust must descend to the realm of the Mothers—goddesses "enthroned sublime in solitude": "Around them is no place, a time still less" (Goethe 180). To guide Faust on his journey into the Void, Mephistopheles gives him a key, explaining that "the key will scent the right place from the others; / Follow it down, 'twill lead you to the Mothers" (181). He adds,

> Descend, then! I might also tell you: Soar!
> It's all the same. Escape from the Existent
> To phantoms' unbound realm far distant! . . .
> Like filmy clouds the phantoms glide along.
> Brandish the key, hold off the shadowy throng . . .
> When you at last a glowing tripod see,
> Then in the deepest of all realms you'll be.
> You'll see the Mothers in the tripod's glow,
> Some of them sitting, others stand and go,
> As it may chance. Formation, transformation,
> Eternal Mind's eternal re-creation.
> Images of all creatures hover free,
> They will not see you, only wraiths they see.
> So, then, take courage, for the danger's great.
> Go to the tripod, do not hesitate,
> And touch it with the key! (Goethe 182)

Armed with the key, Faust stamps his foot and sinks from sight, to rise two scenes later in the midst of the Emperor's court with the Mothers' tripod in his possession. Though Goethe imagines the tripod (a bowl mounted on three legs) as being a container for burning incense, he undoubtedly means for us to associate it as well with the tripod at Delphi upon which Apollo's priestess, the Pythia, sat to receive the god's oracles. According to Diodorus Siculus (16.26), the Delphic tripod was placed above a cleft in the earth from which arose narcotic vapors that inspired the priestess seated in the tripod's bowl, the tripod thus being the means by which vaporous, prophetic images were born from the telluric womb. As Faust touches the maternal bowl with the phallic key (he has earlier described the key as growing in size as he holds it, filling him with new strength [Goethe 181–82]), he intones,

> In your name, Mothers! ye who have your throne
> In boundless space, eternally alone,
> Yet not alone. Around your heads there waver
> Life's images, astir, yet lifeless ever.
> What once has been, in radiance supernal,
> It's stirring there, for it would be eternal,
> And ye allot it, Powers who all things sway,
> To vaulted night, to canopy of day.
> On some the lovely stream of life lays hold,
> Others are sought by the magician bold;
> Boldly in rich profusion he displays
> The marvel whereon each would like to gaze. (186)

At the key's touch, the glowing bowl emits "vaporous clouds" that "make music as they go" (Goethe 187), and from these clouds the forms of Paris and Helen emerge.

Goethe told Eckermann that he had found a reference to the Mothers as ancient Greek goddesses in Plutarch (Jantz 31). The reference, in Plutarch's life of Marcellus (chapter 20), immediately follows, as Harold Jantz notes, a lengthy discourse "on the theme of pure Platonic ideas, the lawful world of the intellect, as manifest in the abstract geometrical researches of Archimedes" (47). And the traditional view of Goethe's realm of the Mothers has been, in the words of George Madison Priest, that "it corresponds to Plato's realm of Ideas in so far as it comprises the eternal and abiding essence of things . . . But whereas Plato regards the realm of ideas as in its very essence fixed and static, Goethe conceives this realm which he calls 'the realm of the Mothers' as one of being and becoming" (Goethe 386). Jantz, however, contends that in reimagining the Platonic realm of ideal forms Goethe reversed "the Platonic concept of the archetypes" in that he considered the archetypes "not the ultimate realities but only the schemata," while he considered "earthly phenomena . . . not mere shadows or reflections of a higher reality" but "reality itself" (Jantz 53).

Whatever Goethe's sense of the locus of reality, there is no mistaking the fact that he imagined Plato's realm of ideal forms as a matrix, thus sug-

gesting the sublimated womb fantasy in the cave allegory. And throughout the remainder of the second part of *Faust,* the Platonic relationship of a three-dimensional body to its two-dimensional image functions as a signifier of that transcendence of bodily limitations Faust seeks in quest of his ultimate goal, the reunion in heaven with the "*Mater Gloriosa*," the "Virgin, Mother, Queen, Goddess" (Goethe 346). Further, since Crane thought of *The Bridge* as a continuation of "the tendencies . . . evident in 'Faustus and Helen'" (Crane 315), it is not surprising that the second part of *Faust,* which serves as an allusive background for Crane's earlier poem and a prime source of its Platonic imagery, serves the same purpose for Crane's epic: as, for example, when Faust's pursuit of Helen, his quest for the "Eternal-Womanly" (Goethe 346), which eventually leads him to his reunion with the *Mater Gloriosa,* functions as an allusive counterpoint to the poetic quester's pursuit of Pocahontas, a pursuit that leads to his final prophetic vision of an ultimate return to origin.

At the first sight of Helen's image, summoned up with the aid of the Mothers' tripod, the enamored Faust attempts to seize the phantom, only to have it vanish at his touch. He then seeks some means of bringing Helen back from the underworld and restoring her to bodily life. Following the advice of Chiron the centaur, he visits the sibyl Manto, who, according to Goethe, had conducted Orpheus into the underworld in search of Eurydice. Together, Faust and Manto descend to the realm of Persephone, a descent that, as with the earlier journey to the realm of the Mothers, takes place offstage and is once again successful in raising Helen from the world of shades, though this time not as a mere image but as a bodily presence.

In Act III, Faust weds Helen, and their child Euphorion, the product of the union of romantic energy and classical beauty, is born. But Euphorion, who Goethe said was "a personification of poetry that is not bound to any time or place or person" (408), is too impetuous in his quest for the sublime. Climbing to the top of a rocky crag in search of ever-wider vision, Euphorion tries to take flight but falls to his death as the chorus cries, "Icarus! Icarus!" (283). Goethe said he modeled the character of Euphorion on Byron, and Goethe's portrait of the sublimely aspiring, self-destructive poet figure Euphorion must have appealed to Crane, particularly because of the way Euphorion returns to his origin in the realm of ideal forms: For an instant Euphorion's lifeless body lies at his parents' feet, then "*the corporeal vanishes*" and "*the aureole*" around his head "*rises like a comet toward heaven,*" leaving his robe, mantle, and lyre on the ground (283). Suddenly the child's voice calls out to his mother from the underworld: "Leave me in realms of death, / Mother, not all alone!" (283). Embracing Faust for the last time, Helen replies, "Receive, Persephone, receive the boy and me" (284), and she vanishes, her empty robe and veil left fluttering in Faust's arms.

This reunion of mother and son in the realm of the Mothers, instantly accomplished at the son's request, is one of the models for the mother-son reunion on the son's own terms that serves as the anthropomorphic figure for an ultimate recovery of origins in *The Bridge.* In the case of both Euphorion and Helen, the body, in vanishing, leaves behind its empty

garment, and this movement from a solid body to its bodiless outline in cloth evokes that movement from three dimensions to two that signifies the transcendence of those corporeal limitations that prevent the total reincorporation of the son's body into the mother's. That the garment image has this meaning for Goethe seems clear when Helen's robes, to which Faust clings, "*dissolve into clouds, surround Faust, lift him in the air, and move away with him*" (284). At the beginning of Act IV, the cloud containing Faust deposits him on a mountain peak and then drifts off toward the east (toward the orient, a word derived from the same Latin root—*oriri*, to rise—as the word *origin*), while Faust describes its changing shape in terms that recall Mephistopheles' earlier description of the Mothers as figures of "formation, transformation":

> Off to the east the mass strains, rolling on and on;
> The eye strains after it . . .
> It breaks while moving, billow-like and changefully,
> Yet seems re-shaping . . .
> On sun-illumined pillows gloriously reclines—
> Of giant size, in truth—a godlike woman's form.
> . . . Like to Juno, Leda, Helena,
> It floats in lovely majesty before my sight . . .
> Yet round me floats a light and tender misty wreath,
> Around my breast and brow . . .
> Doth a rapturing form deceive
> Mine eyes, youth's first, long-unenjoyed and highest bliss? . . .
> Like beauty of the soul the lovely form becomes
> More fair, dissolving not, but through the ether soars
> And draws the best of all my being on and on. (Goethe 288)

In the misty form that floats before him after the cloud has departed, Faust seems to recognize the shape of his earliest love, Gretchen. This juxtaposition of the cloudy maternal figure on the horizon and the misty form that attends Faust, drawing the best of all his being on, prefigures Faust's final meeting with the *Mater Gloriosa* in heaven, where his former lover Gretchen (who was saved from damnation at the end of Part I, just as Faust will be at the end of Part II) appears as a penitent to instruct Faust and lead him upward to "higher spheres" (Goethe 345). (One is reminded in this connection of the transition from "Ave Maria" to "Harbor Dawn" with its juxtaposition of the Virgin Mary [whose presence is symbolized for Columbus by the sky's blue mantle] and the mysterious dream lover [whose image leads the quester onward to the ultimate reunion].)

At the beginning of Act V, Faust, now an old man, is engaged in his final work. For years he has labored to push back the sea by draining the marsh lands, reclaiming from the "fierce billows" a "garden . . . fair as Paradise of old" (Goethe 317), a quest to reclaim the original garden world from beneath the sea that Crane in effect echoes when he figures the recovery of the original American nature world as the raising of the sunken island continent Atlantis. But in the midst of his reclamation work, Faust dies, and

the devils come for his soul. Unlike Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, however, Goethe's hero is saved from damnation because, as the angels who bear his "immortal part" aloft explain, "Who e'er aspiring, struggles on, / For him there is salvation" (341).

And indeed the opening lines of "The Tunnel" may well be an allusion to the differing fates of Goethe's and Marlowe's protagonists. The poetic quester imagines himself leaving the performance of a play in Manhattan for the subway ride back to Brooklyn:

> Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces—
> Mysterious kitchens . . . You shall search them all.
> Someday by heart you'll learn each famous sight
> And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;
> You'll find the garden in the third act dead,
> Finger your knees—and wish yourself in bed
> With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight.
>
> Then let you reach your hat
> and go.
> As usual, let you—also
> walking down—exclaim
> to twelve upward leaving
> a subscription praise
> for what time slays. (Crane 67)

The "garden in the third act" suggests the ancient pastoral realm of Arcadia, the setting of the final scene of *Faust*'s third act, Part II. In this classical version of the original garden world, Faust finds and then loses a purely earthly paradise: here he weds Helen and fathers Euphorion, but here also Euphorion dies, and Helen leaves Faust to be reunited with her son in the underworld. It is from this earthly garden that the cloud formed from Helen's garments carries Faust up to a mountain peak, an ascent that symbolizes the ultimately elevating character of Faust's love of beauty and that prefigures the final ascent of Faust's "immortal part" into heaven and the drama's closing lines: "The Eternal-Womanly / Draws us above" (Goethe 346). In this connection Crane's image of "mysterious kitchens," which the quester must search in pursuit of his goal, is more than likely a reference to the Witch's Kitchen in Part I of *Faust*. There, after glimpsing an image of ideal female beauty in a magic mirror, Faust is given a witch's love potion that makes him see "a Helena in every girl" he meets (Goethe 76). Under the potion's influence, he falls in love with Gretchen and begins his pursuit of the "Eternal-Womanly." But of course the quester's mentioning the word *kitchens* as he is leaving the Manhattan theater district is undoubtedly also meant to evoke the area of the city (bounded by 34th Street and 59th Street and between 8th Avenue and the Hudson River) known as "Hell's Kitchen," the area directly to the west of the theater district.

Balanced against these apparent allusions to the ultimate salvation of Goethe's Faust is Crane's image of the quester "walking down" as the scis-

sor-like hands of the clock close at midnight, slaying another day, an image that recalls the final scene of Marlowe's play where Faustus, knowing he will be dragged down to hell on the stroke of midnight, cries out in his last hour: "Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of Heaven / That time may cease, and midnight never come . . . / The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike, / The Devil will come and Faustus must be damned" (324). Whether the quester's "walking down" refers to his leaving the theater balcony or his descending the subway stairs to catch a train, this movement begins his descent into the modern underworld of the poem's penultimate section, "The Tunnel," a downward journey announced by the final words of the preceding "Quaker Hill" section ("descend— / descend").

It is significant in this regard that William Carlos Williams in *In the American Grain* introduces *his* book's penultimate chapter (on Poe) with a chapter entitled "Descent," in which he evokes Sam Houston's return to live with the Cherokees (after the failure of his marriage and his departure from public life) as a sinking back into the soil, a downward journey to recover an American ground. Houston "turned back to the Indians, it is the saving gesture—but a gesture of despair. Poe can be understood only in a knowledge of his deep roots" (Williams 213). Since Houston's descent to the ground ultimately involved his taking "an Indian woman for his wife" (214), this episode is clearly meant to echo Williams's earlier image of the explorer De Soto wedding the woman-continent and descending into the telluric womb as his body is thrown into the Mississippi: "Down, down, this solitary sperm, down into the liquid, the formless, the insatiable belly of sleep" (58). Williams completes the symbolic equations of Houston with Poe and of Houston with De Soto when he drops the middle term (Houston) in the Poe chapter: "One is forced on the conception of the New World as a woman. Poe was a new De Soto" (220). In a November 1926 letter to Waldo Frank, Crane describes "Williams' *American Grain*" as "an achievement that I'd be proud of," and he adds, "I put off reading it, you know, until I felt my own way cleared beyond chance of confusions incident to reading a book so intimate to my theme. I was so interested to note that he puts Poe and his 'character' in the same position as I had *symbolized* for him in 'The Tunnel' section" (498).

The notion that an ascent to the heights (such as Houston's on reentering public life or Poe's in virtually founding American literature) requires a prior descent in which one returns to the ground to confront *de profundis* the inevitability and the reality of one's own despair ("All have to come from under and through a dead layer" [Williams 213]) would have meshed with Crane's reading of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and its recurring imagery of a descent to the depths and of man as "a *going under*" (127), a continual self-overcoming, that makes him a "bridge" to the Overman (127). (Zarathustra's notion of "*going under*" [*Untergang*] is, of course, part of the allusive resonance of Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes* [*The Decline of the West*].) And this notion of descent as the artist's confronting death and overcoming despair is made explicit in the lines that lead up to the final words of "Quaker Hill," where descent "yields / That patience that

is armour and that shields / Love from despair—when love foresees the end" (66).

In obliquely invoking the images of Goethe's and Marlowe's protagonists at the beginning of the quester's descent, Crane in effect establishes, on the one hand, these protagonists' opposing fates as possible outcomes for the quester's journey to Crane's version of the Mothers' subterranean realm (indeed, the very fact that the quester finds "the garden in the third act dead" indicates how near he is to despair at this point in his pursuit of the ideal), while he prepares us, on the other hand, for that moment of redemptive vision in the subway when the quester superimposes Helen's image on the washerwoman returning home to her children. This superimposition begins with the quester's imaginative vision of Poe and the question: "why do I often meet your visage here, / Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on / Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?" (69). In terms of structure and imagery, this glimpse of Poe in a subway car recalls the moment in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" when the protagonist, "lost yet poised in traffic," has an imaginative vision of Helen on a street car:

> Then I might find your eyes across an aisle,
> Still flickering with those prefigurations—
> Prodigal, yet uncontested now,
> Half-riant before the jerky window frame.
>
> There is some way, I think, to touch
> Those hands of yours that count the nights
> Stippled with pink and green advertisements. (20)

But what has Poe to do with Helen of Troy that the visionary appearance of the former in *The Bridge* should so closely resemble structurally that of the latter in the earlier poem? Crane points to the link between them in his description of Poe's eyes as "agate lanterns," an allusion to the ending of one of Poe's most famous poems, the 1843 "To Helen":

> Helen, thy beauty is to me
> Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
> That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
> The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
> To his own native shore.
>
> On desperate seas long wont to roam,
> Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
> Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
> To the glory that was Greece,
> And the grandeur that was Rome.
>
> Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
> How statue-like I see thee stand,
> The agate lamp within thy hand!
> Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
> Are Holy-Land! (Poe, *Collected* 1:165–66)

Poe's "eyes like agate lanterns" reflect, as it were, his poetic vision of Helen standing with an "agate lamp" in her hand guiding the seafarer home to his native shore, in much the same way that the quester's vision of Poe persevering in his search for ideal beauty in America even to the point of death now guides the quester on to his soul's true home. It is this moment of self-recognition and acceptance (in which the quester acknowledges that his fate as a pursuer of beauty in this world may be the same as Poe's) that enables him to find the ideal in the real, to see the image of Helen in the humble washerwoman: "And does the Daemon take you home, also, / Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair? / After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors— / The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare, / O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands / Back home to children and to golden hair?" (Crane 70).

The implication is that the children's golden hair has been inherited from their mother (whose own hair, perhaps grown grey, is apparently wrapped in a scrubwoman's bandanna), and golden hair is, of course, Crane's metonym for Helen in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" which ends with the image of the artist sacrificing himself for the vision of ideal beauty, his "substance drilled and spent beyond repair / For golden, or the shadow of gold hair" (23). The association of gold with immortality (because of the metal's incorruptible luster even when buried in the earth) and the fact that hair is one of the parts of the body least subject to decay after death (as the quester says in "The Tunnel," "This answer lives like verdigris, like hair / Beyond extinction, surcease of the bone" [68]) makes "golden hair" an appropriate image of immortal beauty in the underworld and thus an image of that immortality that the poet, who creates a vision of deathless beauty, wins for himself in death. For what the quester sees in the washerwoman returning home on the underground to her children is the image of Helen in "the garden of the third act" of *Faust* returning home to the underworld to be reunited with her son Euphorion, who cries out, "Leave me in realms of death, / Mother, not all alone!" (Goethe 283).

It is worth noting in this regard that in an early poem, "C-33" (1916), Crane associates the image of golden hair (most likely the golden-haired grain) with what seems to be the figure of Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, searching for her daughter Korē (Persephone) whom Hades has carried off to the underworld: "O Materna! to enrich thy gold head / And wavering shoulders with a new light shed // From penitence must needs bring pain, / And with it song of minor, broken strain. / But you who hear the lamp whisper thru night / Can trace paths tear-wet, and forget all blight" (91). The details in this passage evoke various moments in the goddess's story (the title *Materna* apparently being Crane's generic Latinizing of the Greek *de meter,* "the mother," though of course the goddess's usual name in Latin is Ceres and that of her daughter Proserpina). For example, in the Homeric hymn to the goddess (an English translation of which was available in the Loeb Classical Library series in 1914, two years before Crane's poem), she is described as both "rich-haired" and "golden-haired" Demeter (Hesiod 289, 311). And Crane's reference to a lamp whispering

"thru night" and her tracing "paths tear-wet" recalls Ceres' fruitless search for Proserpina as recounted, for example, in Book 5 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Meanwhile all in vain the affrighted mother seeks her daughter in every land, on every deep . . . She kindles two pine torches in the fire of Aetna, and wanders without rest through the frosty shades of night" (*Ovid* 3:269). Unable to find her daughter, Ceres "reproached all lands, calling them ungrateful and unworthy of the gift of corn . . . In her rage she gave to destruction farmers and cattle alike, and bade the plowed fields to betray their trust, and blighted the seed" (3:271).

When the goddess eventually learns that Hades has carried off her daughter and that Zeus (who is both Demeter's brother and Korē's father) had consented to this, Demeter leaves Olympus and shuns the company of the gods. Moved by the other gods' pleas to intervene before the human race dies of famine, Zeus enforces a compromise whereby Korē spends part of the year with her husband in the underworld and part with her mother in the upper world. Demeter accepts the compromise and forgets "all blight," in Crane's words. When Korē is reunited with her mother, Demeter rejoices, and the land is fruitful. But when her daughter returns to the underworld, the mother grieves, and the dead time of winter ensues.

In his popular summary of the myth, Bulfinch makes its agricultural significance clear: "There can be little doubt of this story of Ceres and Proserpine being an allegory. Proserpine signifies the seed-corn which when cast into the ground lies there concealed—that is, she is carried off by the god of the underworld. It reappears—that is, Proserpine is restored to her mother. Spring leads her back to the light of day" (57). As an allegory of the seasonal, vegetative cycle, the myth of Demeter and Korē is a female counterpart of that of a dying and reviving god such as Dionysus and may reflect an ancient period when agriculture was solely the province of women. The names in the myth bespeak its agricultural subtext. The Latin *Ceres* is the root of the English *cereal,* and the Greek *Korē* (meaning "maiden" or "daughter") is the root of *corn,* evoking Demeter's daughter as the seed corn planted beneath the ground. Of course, the grain the ancients called *corn* was not the New World maize, commonly referred to in America by that name, but barley. Demeter and Korē, the mother and the daughter, figuratively embody, then, the fruitful earth and her golden-haired offspring (indeed, some etymologists have even suggested the derivation of *Demeter* from the Greek *Ge-meter,* "earth-mother"), and the cyclic renewal of vegetative life evoked by the pair was applied by the Greeks to human life in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Though it was forbidden to reveal the Mysteries under pain of death, there are enough hints from ancient writers to conjecture that at Eleusis the myth of the mother and the maiden was probably

> enacted as a sacred drama. There was certainly music and dancing, a gong sounding at the name of Korē, a spectacular display of torches, and a theophany (the manifestation of a deity). We know of an antiphonal cry, rhyming in Greek, to the sky god 'Rain!', to the earth 'Conceive!' The climax was

> something seen, probably the display of a golden ear of corn. The initiates were allowed to handle sacred objects, and took part in some kind of communion-meal of cereal and barley-wine. There is some evidence that the initiate became one with the Maiden . . . The promise was that with Korē the initiate descended to the world of the dead and rose to a richer and better life. The condition was moral and ritual purity. (Cavendish 146)

In his work of elaborating the triple archetype of mother-virgin-lover in *The Bridge,* Crane would surely have noticed the reciprocity between the myth of the grieving Demeter winning her daughter back from the underworld (even if only periodically) and Goethe's story of the grieving Helen returning to the underworld to be reunited with her son, and since golden hair is a descriptive detail common to both figures, Crane could easily have associated the cyclic renewal, the vegetative immortality as it were, of the golden-haired grain with the incorruptible beauty of the golden-haired Helen in the underworld—ever-renewing grain and incorruptible gold both being forms of wealth whose ultimate origin is the realm of Pluto (a name literally meaning "wealth"). Moreover, in his elaboration of a triple female figure created by merging details from several myths, Crane seems quite clearly to have associated Demeter and Korē, in their roles as the barley mother and the seed that grows into the grain, with the mythic figure of the Amerindian Corn Mother, whose image merges in Crane's poem with that of the maiden Pocahontas, the virgin continent. As the folklorist Frank Waters notes, the Indians' earth goddess "gives her children everything they need to sustain them; she gives them their immemorial bread of life, or as the Navahos call it, their 'gift of life'—the indigenous New World maize . . . Out of corn, then, springs another image, the Corn Mother who is synonymous with the Earth Mother" (195–96).

Thus, for example, in the opening stanza of "The Dance," Crane says of the Indian earth mother that in spring "she spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die" (45). And three stanzas later the quester comes upon an imagined scene of interrupted lovemaking between the Indian chieftain Maquokeeta and the earth goddess, and the quester addresses her by the name of her virginal incarnation as "Pocahontas, bride— / O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May" (45). And still later, after the chieftain has been translated into the Morning Star, Maquokeeta looks back to see his "bride immortal in the maize"(48). The virgin-continent Pocahontas is identified, then, with the Indian Corn Mother, and like Helen, who passed from Greeks to Trojans and back to Greeks, "knowing," as Crane says in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," "the press of troubled hands, too alternate / With steel and soil to hold" her "endlessly" (20), Pocahontas, in passing from Indians to whites to whoever eventually displaces the whites, quite clearly has about her the aura of the virgin-whore, an aura evoked in the epigraph to "Powhatan's Daughter" where the historical Pocahontas is described as "wanton" (38).

The triple archetype of mother-virgin-lover is, of course, present in the figure of the Virgin Mary as well. While her roles as virgin and mother

are obvious enough, her role as lover, that is, the consort of the deity, has always been repressed or downplayed in Christianity; yet she is, after all, inseminated by the same deity to whose human incarnation she gives birth, and her child is fathered by someone other than her husband Joseph. Obviously, the triple aspect of Mary is appropriate to the triple personality of the deity with whom she is linked—her motherhood corresponding to the First Person's fatherhood, her virginity to the Second Person's celibacy (if not virginity), and her role as consort corresponding to the Third Person's role as inseminator (a role iconographically evoked through the Holy Spirit's characteristic representation as a dove, a bird traditionally associated with Venus in classical lore).

We should note that the three roles combined in the figure of Mary are distributed among three separate goddesses in the myth of the origin of the Trojan War. When Paris must choose among Hera (the goddess of married women and childbirth), the virgin Pallas Athena, and Aphrodite (the goddess of love) to award the golden apple that the goddess of discord has cast into a gathering of the Olympians, he gives the prize to Aphrodite. She rewards him by making the most beautiful woman in the world (Helen, the wife of Menelaus) fall in love with him and desert her husband and children to flee to Troy. The Trojan War results, and Hera and Athena's undying enmity at not having been chosen by Paris ultimately causes Troy's fall. In this distribution of the triple archetype of mother-virgin-whore among Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, respectively, Helen, though a mother herself, ends up being identified with Aphrodite and thus with the third of the three roles. We will have more to say about this configuration of goddesses later when we consider the way Crane, in his own version of the Joycean-Eliotic "mythical method," layers episodes from the story of Aeneas beneath the actions of the poetic quester in *The Bridge*. For the moment suffice it to note that what Goethe does in *Faust* is to restore to the figure of Helen, a figure traditionally evoked as the sensual lover or adulterous consort, the role of grieving mother and thus to set up the transition from Helen to the Virgin Mother of God (in whom the role of lover or consort is traditionally repressed) through the intermediary figure of the fallen but redeemed maiden Gretchen.

Just as Goethe uses the moment of Helen's reunion with her son to begin the translation of the image of ideal beauty from a physical to a spiritual plane—from Helen as sensual lover in Act II, on through the episode of maternal self-sacrifice that concludes Act III, to the figure of the *Mater Gloriosa* as selfless mother devoted to the service of her Son at the end of Act V (an archetypal mother figure whose image subsumes that of the earthly mother Helen, as indicated by the transformation of Helen's cloudy garments into "a godlike woman's form" on the horizon beckoning Faust toward his final goal)—so Crane in a similar manner uses the moment when the quester sees the washerwoman in the subway to merge Helen's image with that of the Virgin Mary. In addressing the "Wop washerwoman" as "O Genoese," Crane recalls Whitman's epithet for Columbus

in "Passage to India" ("Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream! / Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave, / The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream" [Whitman 289]), thereby directing our attention back to Columbus's prayer to the Virgin in "Ave Maria" ("O Madre Maria, still / One ship of these thou grantest safe returning; / Assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue!" [35–36]) and thus signaling the quester's recovery not only of Columbus's dream but also of Goethe's, that dream of selfless maternal love from "the garden in the third act" of *Faust,* a dream that was dead for the quester at the beginning of "The Tunnel" but that has been revitalized by the appearance of the Genoese mother in the subway.

As if in response to that moment when the Genoese son asks his spiritual mother to let him return home (significantly, Crane's Columbus represents himself as exiled from his natal place: "I thought of Genoa; and this truth, now proved, / That made me exile in her streets" [35]), the quester sees the Genoese mother, with her aura of Helen and the Virgin, returning home to her children—an image that subtly translates the mother-son reunion from the mother's terms to the son's as the mother now *seeks out the son* through the womb of the underworld. At this point, as the phallic serpent-train moves through the tunnel, the quester feels as if he has been reduced to some cosmic plasma or sperm-like fluid in the eternal recurrence of birth, death, and rebirth: The Daemon of this modern underworld aims

> To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
> Locution of the eldest star, and pack
> The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,
> Umbilical to call—and straightway die! . . .
> And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope,
> The sod and billow breaking,—lifting ground,
> —A sound of waters bending astride the sky
> Unceasing with some Word that will not die . . . ! (70)

The quester's return to a kind of embryonic state, from which he is reborn as the train ascends from the tunnel, recalls the ending of *Faust,* where the chorus of angels snatches Faust's "immortal part" from the "maw of Hell" (Goethe 333 ff.) and, bearing it aloft, entrusts it to the choir of "Blesséd Boys," infants who died at birth (significantly, Crane describes the sound of the "Daemon" train in the tunnel as "The muffled slaughter of a day in birth" [70]) and who preside over Faust's spiritual rebirth. The Blesséd Boys sing,

> Glad we're receiving now
> Him as a chrysalis,
> Thereby achieving now
> Pledge of angelic bliss.
> Loosen all earthly flakes
> That cling around him;
> Fair and great now he wakes,
> Divine life has crowned him. (Goethe 342)

As an image of transformation, the chrysalis or pupa is, of course, an ancient symbol of rebirth to a higher form of life; and one that rhymes with Crane's image of golden hair as a figure of immortality, since the Greek *chrysallis* (the golden-colored cocoon of the butterfly) ultimately derives from *chrysos* (gold). This famous use of the chrysalis image in *Faust* may also lie behind Crane's figuration, in "Atlantis," of the visionary bridge's "lariat sweep" within which "encinctured sing / In single chrysalis the many twain" (73). As the spiritually reborn Faust ascends through the celestial region, he sees the *Mater Gloriosa* attended by a group of penitent women who symbolize a sensual female love sublimed through emulation of the heavenly mother into a selfless maternal love for the *Mater Gloriosa*'s Son. Three of them—Mary Magdalene, the Woman of Samaria, and Mary of Egypt—intercede with the Mater Gloriosa for a fourth penitent, Faust's first love Gretchen, and she, in turn, upon seeing her "early lover, / His troubles over" (Goethe 345), come back to her, asks to be Faust's instructress in words that make Gretchen sound as if she has become Faust's surrogate mother: "Girt by the noble choir of Heaven, / Himself the newcome scarcely knows, . . . / Now in ethereal garb of Heaven / Appears his pristine, youthful strength, / Oh, grant that I may now instruct him, / Since blinds him still the new-born day" (345).

The play's final assimilation of the images of the three fallen women and the young virgin who was Faust's early love to the figure of the *Mater Gloriosa* serves as a further allusive background to the triple archetype of mother-virgin-lover in *The Bridge* and sheds light on the structural relationship of the "Three Songs" (with their modern degraded images of these archetypal female roles: "Eve! Magdalene! / or Mary, you?" asks the quester in "Southern Cross") to "The Tunnel," where the sight of the peasant washerwoman reincarnates the images of Helen and the Virgin and redeems the ideal figure of the Eternal-Womanly as a real force in the modern world.

In the closing lines of *Faust,* the *Mater Gloriosa* tells Gretchen, "Come, rise to higher spheres! Conduct him! / If he feels thee, he'll go thy way" (Goethe 345), and while Doctor Marianus sings the praises of the "Virgin, Mother, Queen, Goddess" (346), the company soars out of sight. Commenting on the final scene, George Madison Priest notes, "Goethe's play never really ends, it only vanishes in dim distance because our senses are not capable of following its ultimate reaches" (Goethe 423). As Faust at the beginning of Act V longs to build "an outlook-point" from which he "can gaze through endless space" (324), so at the end of the act his immortal part disappears from view into endless space, the I following the eye into that vanishing point at infinity, that visual/metaphysical vortex that the play implicitly identifies with the Infinite Origin.

This association of the eye's longing for the vanishing point on the horizon with the self's desire for a total return to the matrix has been evoked at the beginning of Act IV when, watching the cloud formed from Helen's garments drift off to the east, Faust says, "The eye strains after it" (Goethe 288). As Faust gazes, the cloud assumes "a godlike woman's form," remind-

ing him of "Juno, Leda, Helena," and the "misty" form of Gretchen then suddenly appears above his head, soaring through the "ether" to "draw the best of all" his "being on." This scene's structure—the vanishing of Helen's body that leaves Faust holding her garments, which turn into a cloud that envelops him and bears him aloft—considered as a figuration of body-transcendence, clearly anticipates the play's ending where Faust, following Gretchen and the *Mater Gloriosa,* soars out of sight, the resemblance of the two moments in effect establishing the technique of *visually* imaging the transcendence of figuration as a form of transfiguration, the technique of foreshadowing the movement from a visible to an invisible world as the movement from a three-dimensional body to its two-dimensional image.

§ 11
Building the Virgin; Crane's "To Liberty"; Lazarus's "The New Colossus"; Helen and Psyche; Astraea and the Constellation Virgo; Demeter and Korē; the Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth I

To judge from Crane's correspondence, he had read Goethe's *Faust* at least four years before reading Spengler, and since both Spengler's sense of the Faustian persona and his images of Faustian aspiration are derived largely from Goethe's play, we can assume that Crane read Spengler's comments about the development of perspective and the eye/I's longing for the infinite vanishing point, about body transcendence and Faustian soul flight, in light of those scenes in *Faust* where the image of soaring out of sight is linked to that of a gigantic woman's form seen against the horizon, beckoning the quester onward and homeward. Indeed, so central to *The Bridge* is this conjunction of images that Crane begins the poem with it: at dawn a seagull soars above the Statue of Liberty, that monumental female figure whose uplifted torch is a beacon for those seeking a new home. The seagull's flight, "*building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty,*" is an image of freedom from bodily constraint that reaches the point of sublime transcendence when the bird's wings "*with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes / As apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures to be filed away.*" In an undated poem entitled "To Liberty," written during the time he was working on *The Bridge* and probably intended at some stage to be one of the sections of the poem (Brom Weber speculates that it may have been the original version of "Virginia" [*Hart* 293 n.]), Crane provides a gloss on this opening scene:

> Out of the seagull cries and wind
> On this strange shore I build
> The virgin. They laugh to hear
> How I endow her, standing
> Hair mocked by the sea, her lover
> A dead sailor that knew
> Not even Helen's fame.

ing him of "Juno, Leda, Helena," and the "misty" form of Gretchen then suddenly appears above his head, soaring through the "ether" to "draw the best of all" his "being on." This scene's structure—the vanishing of Helen's body that leaves Faust holding her garments, which turn into a cloud that envelops him and bears him aloft—considered as a figuration of body-transcendence, clearly anticipates the play's ending where Faust, following Gretchen and the *Mater Gloriosa,* soars out of sight, the resemblance of the two moments in effect establishing the technique of *visually* imaging the transcendence of figuration as a form of transfiguration, the technique of foreshadowing the movement from a visible to an invisible world as the movement from a three-dimensional body to its two-dimensional image.

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> Out of the seagull cries and wind
> On this strange shore I build
> The virgin. They laugh to hear
> How I endow her, standing
> Hair mocked by the sea, her lover
> A dead sailor that knew
> Not even Helen's fame.

Light the last torch in the wall,
The sea wall. Bring her no robes yet.
They have not seen her in this harbor;
Eyes widely planted, clear, yet small.
And must they overcome the fog,
Or must we rend our dream? (125)

These last two lines combine images from *The Bridge*'s "Harbor Dawn" section (where the quester, on a foggy morning near New York harbor, awakens from sleep into "a waking dream" in which he merges his "seed" with a mysterious woman) and the "Indiana" section (where the pioneer mother recounts her son's birth ["And bison thunder rends my dreams no more / As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you / Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door"] as part of her plea that he ultimately return home). The images of a dream-like sexual union with the mysterious woman (a virgin goddess, in effect) and of a violent birth that, in the context of the mother's plea to her son, evokes its reverse (a total return) suggest the background against which Crane carries out his project in *The Bridge* to "build / The virgin" on "this strange shore," which is to say, the project of personifying in the maiden Pocahontas the inexhaustible virginity of the American land and spirit. In an August 1926 letter to Waldo Frank, Crane says that he has just written "two of three songs" and that "the last, 'Virginia' (virgin in the process of 'being built') may come along any time" (480). The images of seagull and torch in "To Liberty" evoke Crane's project of creating a female personification of the ideal in *The Bridge* as a task analogous to erecting the Statue of Liberty, that other public structure that dominates New York harbor and that was completed in 1886 just three years after the Brooklyn Bridge. But of course in assimilating his *poetic* project of building the virgin to the construction of the Statue of Liberty, Crane also implicitly invokes the poem most closely associated with the statue (just as he expects his own epic, with the passage of time, to become the poem most closely associated with Brooklyn Bridge). That other poem (inscribed on a bronze plaque at the statue's base) is Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus":

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,
Here at our sea-washed, sunset-gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome, her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin-cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she,
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" (40)

Lazarus's "mighty woman with a torch" (a "Mother" who lifts her "lamp beside the golden door" as a beacon for "the homeless, tempest-tost") merges details from the female figure in Poe's "To Helen" (who, standing "statue-like" in a "brilliant window-niche," bears an "agate lamp" to guide the "weary, way-worn wanderer" to his "native shore") and the virgin in Crane's "To Liberty" (with her "lover / A dead sailor that knew / Not even Helen's fame" presumably being the person for whose overdue return "the last torch in . . . the sea wall" has been lighted).

Since Poe apostrophizes the woman in "To Helen" as "Psyche," the detail of her holding an agate lamp is probably an allusion to the importance of a lamp in Apuleius's story of Cupid and Psyche in *The Golden Ass.* And it is an allusion Crane would have caught, since we know from his correspondence that he had read Apuleius as early as October 1920 (234). Recall that in the tale Psyche is a maiden of such beauty that men neglect the worship of Venus to admire her. Venus becomes jealous and sends her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a clod, but Cupid, on seeing her, falls in love himself. He sequesters Psyche in a palace, visiting her by night and making her promise never to try to see his face. But Psyche, overcome by curiosity and apprehension, lights a lamp one night after Cupid has fallen asleep. Amazed that her nocturnal companion is the god of love, Psyche accidentally drips hot oil from the lamp on Cupid's shoulder. He awakens, reproaches her lack of trust, and departs. Determined to win Cupid back, Psyche presents herself to Venus, offering to do any service if the goddess will intervene with her son. Equally determined that Psyche will never be reunited with Cupid, Venus sets a series of impossible tasks, which Psyche finally accomplishes with the help of a variety of woodland creatures. In the meantime, Cupid, recovered from his wound, has regretted his decision to abandon Psyche. He seeks Jove's help in getting his mother to agree to their marriage, and Jove arranges the match by making Psyche an immortal. Apuleius's account of the union of Love and the Soul (the literal meaning of *Psyche*) concludes with the birth of their first child, Pleasure.

In addressing the woman in "To Helen" as "Psyche," Poe bases her association with Helen of Troy on the fact that each is presented as the most beautiful woman in the world in their respective stories and that the admiration of their beauty attracts the attention of Venus, in Helen's case with disastrous results and in Psyche's with a happier outcome. Moreover, the image of Helen's beauty—her "hyacinth hair" and "classic face"—as a goal that guides the "wanderer" back to his "home" (reminiscent of Faust's question "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" in Marlowe's play) subtly metamorphoses, through the image of Psyche's using a lamp to see the face of her lover, into the figure of a woman holding a lamp in a window to guide her lover to the "Holy-Land," an apparent Platonizing of Helen's image that transforms hers from a sensual to a spiritual love. At any rate, Crane would have seen the relationship among Poe's "To Helen," Lazarus's "The New Colossus," and his own "To Liberty" as one in which each poem contributed one or more female personae to the composite sig-

nificance of that monumental figure of a woman with a torch that stands across "the air-bridged harbor" from the structure that formed the subject of his poem.

Just as surely Crane also associated another mythic female with the Statue of Liberty (as details from the poem indicate)—the figure of Astraea, the last of the immortals to leave the earth. As Ovid recounts in the first book of the *Metamorphoses,* after the golden age of Saturn's rule had passed, the silver age of Jove ensued, to be succeeded in turn by the age of brass, each subsequent age representing a decline in human conduct from the previous one. But it was not until the arrival of the fourth age, that of iron, that evil was let loose upon the world: "Not only did men demand of the bounteous fields the crops and sustenance they owed, but they delved as well into the very bowels of earth; and . . . wealth . . . was brought to light, wealth that pricks men on to crime. And now baneful iron had come, and gold more baneful than iron; war came . . . Men lived on plunder . . . Piety lay vanquished, and the maiden Astraea, last of the immortals, abandoned the blood-soaked earth" (*Ovid* 3:13).

As we saw, this theme of a lost golden age and a present age of iron in which men neglect the cultivation of mother earth and its golden-haired offspring, the grain, to exploit the land through activities such as gold mining runs throughout *The Bridge.* It underlies, for example, the opening section's image of Manhattan, where darkness and snow submerge "*an iron year*" (34), as well as the "iron" imagery in Crane's description of the supplanting of the Indians' nature world by the white's industrialization of the land in "The River":

> Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,
> The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
> Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain
> And re-descend with corn for querulous crows.
> Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,
> Propitiate them for their timber torn
> By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!
> They doze now, below axe and powder horn. (43)

This theme of neglecting the land to search for gold is, of course, given its most explicit statement in "Indiana," its disastrous results recalling Columbus's warning to the king of Spain in "Ave Maria" not to exploit the New World for its riches.

Ovid's account of the four ages and of Astraea's flight from the world draws on the tradition of a lost golden age suggested by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* and elaborated by the Greek writer Aratus in his astronomical poem of the third century BC, the *Phaenomena.* Discussing the constellation Virgo, the sixth sign of the zodiac, Aratus explains that the female figure in the stars is that of the "Maiden, who in her hands bears the gleaming Ear of Corn" (215). This Maiden (Greek, *Parthenos,* "virgin"), whether, as Aratus says, "she be daughter of Astraeus, who, men say, was of old the father of the stars, or the child of other sire," was, when she dwelled

among men, "called Justice" (Greek, *Dike*) (215). In the golden age men lived "a simple life . . . Far from them was the cruel sea and not yet from afar did ships bring their livelihood, but the oxen and the plough and Justice herself, queen of the peoples, giver of things just, abundantly supplied their every need" (215). (This opposition between land and sea, between the peaceful abundance associated with the earth's cultivation—the golden-haired grain—and the cruelty and danger associated with seafaring as a means of getting gold through plunder or commerce, resonates in the son's choice of livelihoods—considered as an image of generational decline—at the end of "Indiana." As we shall see later, it resonates as well in the epigraph from Seneca's *Medea* that Crane places at the beginning of "Ave Maria," an epigraph evoking the initial voyage of the first ship—Jason's sailing the Argo in quest of the golden fleece.) When, with the passing of the golden age and the succeeding ages, men began "to forge the sword of the highwayman" and "to eat of the flesh of the ploughing ox, then verily did Justice loathe that race of men and fly heavenward and took up that abode, where even now in the night time the Maiden is seen of men" (Aratus 217). But this myth of Justice's flight to the heavens seemed to hold out for later writers, as we shall see presently, the promise that the maiden Astraea might one day return from the stars and the golden age of justice and plenty come again.

Obviously, other female figures besides Astraea (Justice) were associated with the constellation Virgo, as one might suspect from Aratus's description of the starry figure as a maiden with "a gleaming Ear of Corn." The constellation's traditional figuration in the Greco-Roman world was as *virgo spicifera,* a winged woman holding a stalk of barley or wheat in her left hand, the stalk's position being marked by the brightest star in the constellation—the spectroscopic binary star Spica (Latin, "spike," "ear of corn"). As R. H. Allen notes in his classic study *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning* (1899), Virgo

> was known in the Attic dialect as *Κόρη* [Korē], the Maiden, representing *Persephone,* the Roman *Proserpina,* daughter of Demeter, the Roman Ceres; while in the Ionic dialect Nonnus, of our 5th century, called her *σταχυώδης Κούρη*, the Wheat-bearing Maiden, *spicifera Virgo Cereris*, the *Virgo spicea munera gestans* of Manilius. When regarded as Proserpina, she was being abducted by Pluto in his Chariot, the stars of adjacent Libra; and the constellation also was *Demeter* herself, the *Ceres spicifera dea,* changed by astrologers to *Arista,* Harvest, of which Ceres was goddess. (460–61)

Considered as Persephone, the figure of Virgo bearing a stalk of barley makes explicit Korē's allegorical significance as the seed corn; considered as Demeter, the figure represents the mother holding her child (the golden-haired grain) in her hand. Aratus's dual association of Virgo with both Astraea-Justice and Demeter-Korē explains the fact that in his account the Maiden is both "the giver of things just" to her peoples and the supplier of "their every need" from the earth's abundance. And just as the adjacent constellation Libra was interpreted as Pluto in his chariot when Virgo was

regarded as Proserpina, so when Virgo was seen as Astraea-Justice, the stars of Libra were read in their more common, present figuration as the Balance. The personification of Justice as a woman wearing a blindfold and bearing aloft a scale in her hand is well known, but in the case of the constellation Virgo, the Balance (Libra) is situated in the sky at the feet of the Maiden and what she bears in her hand is, as we noted, an ear of corn whose position, marked by the star Spica, is usually depicted iconographically as being the Maiden's left hand held down at her side.

For Crane it would have been a short associative step from the monumental figure of a woman bearing a torch aloft in her right hand seen against the night sky of New York harbor to the figure of a colossal woman among the stars holding an ear of corn in her left hand and with a balance at her feet—the former figure associated with Liberty, the latter with Justice, each with a "beacon-hand" in Lazarus's words (the torch, the star Spica), the two together personifying the American promise of "liberty and justice for all." And just as the Statue of Liberty represents "the Mother of Exiles" holding a beacon for her "tempest-tost" children beside "the Golden Door," so the constellation Virgo represents either a maiden (Astraea) associated with the Golden Age or a mother and child (Demeter-Korē) associated with the golden-haired grain. We should also note that in Lazarus's "The New Colossus" the monumental female figure erected in the New World is specifically distinguished from the "brazen" figure of the old Colossus of Rhodes ("Not like that brazen giant of Greek fame, / With conquering limbs astride from land to land"), a detail Crane might well have taken as alluding to the fact that, unlike Ovid's account in which Astraea leaves the earth for the stars with the coming of the age of iron, Aratus's version of the myth has Astraea-Justice depart the earth with the coming of the "Race of Bronze" (Aratus 217).

Among the several other figures associated with the constellation Virgo, at least two are relevant to Crane's poetic project of building the virgin, his project of superimposing upon, or layering beneath, the image of the personified virgin-continent Pocahontas the images of other historical or mythical women. The first and most important of these is the Virgin Mary. Allen notes that in ancient Egypt the constellation was identified "with Isis, the thousand-named goddess, with the wheat ears in her hand . . . or clasping in her arms the young Horus, the infant Southern sun-god, the last of the divine kings. This very ancient figuring reappeared in the Middle Ages as the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus, Shakespeare alluding to it in *Titus Andronicus* as the Good Boy in Virgo's lap; and Albertus Magnus, of our 13th century, asserted that the Saviour's horoscope lay here" (Allen 462–63).

This association of Mary with Virgo-Astraea has its ultimate origin in Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue.* Virgil begins his poem by alluding to the prophecy contained in the Sibylline books (the supposed utterances of the Cumaean Sibyl) that after the passing of the Age of Iron the cycle of ages will begin again and the Golden Age return: "Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin

returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high" (1:29). And what causes the end of the Iron Age and the Virgin's return, says Virgil, is that a child is about to be born "under whom the iron brood shall first cease, and a golden race spring up throughout the world" (1:29), a child who "shall have the gift of divine life" (1:31). As this child grows, "slowly shall the plain yellow with the waving corn," though still "shall some few traces of olden sin lurk behind, to call men to essay the sea in ships, to gird towns with walls" (1:31). But when the child reaches maturity, then "even the trader shall quit the sea" and "every land shall bear all fruits"; "the earth shall not feel the harrow" and the ploughman "shall now loose his oxen from the yoke" (1:31–33). May that child be born soon, says Virgil, so that he may enter on his "high honours" and Virgil live long enough to sing of his deeds.

Whatever Virgil may have meant by this "child," subsequent interpreters have usually taken it as a prophetic figuration of both the coming of the Roman Empire and the spread of the *pax Romanum,* considered as a return of the Golden Age, and they cite in support of this reading the passage from the *Aeneid,* Book 6, in which Aeneas descends in the company of the Cumaean Sibyl into the underworld to receive from his father, Anchises, a prophetic vision of Rome's future: "Behold this people, thine own Romans. Here is Caesar, and all Iülus' seed, destined to pass beneath the sky's mighty vault. This, this is he, whom thou so oft hearest promised to thee, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who shall again set up the Golden Age . . . and shall spread his empire past Garamant and Indian, to a land that lies beyond the stars" (Virgil 1:561–63). With the coming of Christianity, however, Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* was given a new interpretation. As Frances Yates notes,

> The child whose advent it foretells becomes Christ, born during the reign of Augustus . . . And the virgin who "returns" . . . becomes, not merely the virgin Astraea returning to earth in the new golden age of empire, but the Virgin Mary, . . . whose appearance with her divine Son ushers in the Christian era.
>
> . . . the first person to make a detailed and public claim for the Fourth Eclogue as a Messianic prophecy was the Emperor Constantine. "Who is that virgin who returns?" enquires the Emperor, and answers his own question; she is the Virgin Mother of Christ. (*Astraea* 34–35)

Virgil's linking of the image of Virgo-Astraea's return in the Fourth *Eclogue* to the Cumaean Sibyl's prophecy of a renewed cycle of ages, and Constantine's identification of this returning virgin as Mary in the context, as Yates points out, of his expounding "the Sybilline prophecies" in relation to "the advent of Christ" (*Astraea* 35), both shed light on another female figure associated with the constellation. Allen notes that Virgo was sometimes identified "as *Σϊβυλλα,* the Singing Sibyl, carrying a branch into Hades" (462), an image that cannot help but recall in the present context Aeneas's descent into Hades bearing the golden bough in company with the Cumaean Sibyl. The Sibyl tells Aeneas that though it is easy

to enter the underworld, if he wants to return he must pluck a certain golden-leafed bough from a tree sacred to Proserpina and then carry with him this "golden-tressed fruitage" (Latin "auricomos . . . fetus," literally "golden-haired offspring") which the "beautiful Proserpine" has "ordained to be borne to her as her own gift" (Virgil 1:516–17). Given that Proserpina/Korē is the offspring (grain) of the golden-haired Ceres/Demeter, it seems only appropriate that Aeneas must present Proserpina with the sacred tree's "golden-haired offspring" (which Virgil likens later in the passage to mistletoe and which Frazer identifies as mistletoe in *The Golden Bough*) in order to reemerge from the underworld, and he must present it as a token of the way that Proserpina herself reemerges when the seed corn sprouts in the spring. This imagery surrounding Aeneas's descent to and return from Hades would have resonated for Crane in Goethe's account of Faust's descent to the realm of the Mothers in order to bring back the golden-haired Helen and Helen's redescent to join her golden-haired offspring, Euphorion.

There is one further figure with whom the conjoined images of Virgo-Astraea-Korē-Mary became associated in the English Renaissance, a figure who in effect brought that image to the doorstep of North America—the virgin queen, Elizabeth I of England. As Yates notes, "the Virgo-Astraea symbol," used for Elizabeth from the very beginning of her reign, "was at its height in the years following the Armada" (*Astraea* 59). In poetry of that period, Elizabeth is identified with both the constellation and the zodiac sign Virgo, as well as with the heavenly virgin Astraea, whose return to the earth establishes (imperial) justice and universal peace. Though Virgo "is an autumnal sign" of the zodiac, "bearing corn in her hands," the imagery of Elizabeth as Virgo in these poems and plays generally associates her with the spring. This "seeming anomaly" is accounted for, says Yates, by "the conflation of Virgo," the autumnal sign, "with Astraea," for "Astraea's spring is not the ordinary season but the eternal spring of the golden age" (*Astraea* 67).

The most influential use of the Virgo-Astraea symbolism to characterize Elizabeth was, of course, in Spenser. As Yates writes, "Spenser is the Virgil of the Elizabethan golden age, and the *Faerie Queene* its great epic," a poem in which "the concept of Elizabeth as the imperial virgin" who dispenses justice and natural abundance is "the lynch-pin" (*Astraea* 69). The "most open treatment of Virgo-Astraea in relation to Elizabeth" comes "in the fifth book," which deals with Justice (70). In evoking Spenser as "the Virgil of the Elizabethan golden age," Yates means not only to recall Virgil's linking of the prophecy of a returning golden age to the figure of Virgo-Astraea in the Fourth *Eclogue* and to the figure of Augustus Caesar and the Roman Empire in the *Aeneid,* Book 6, but also to recall Elizabeth's association with both of these. Her connection with the former imagery is clear, but her link with Aeneas's vision of the coming of the Roman Empire is perhaps less so. Recall that Virgil's Aeneas, who founded the city that ultimately became Rome and originated the line that culminated in Julius

Caesar and his adopted son Augustus, was a refugee from the fallen Troy and that Spenser allegorically depicts Elizabeth (in the character of Gloriana) as the descendant of "an 'imperial' Trojan line" (Yates, *Astraea* 70).

While it is through the association of Virgo-Astraea with Mary that the classical imagery of a starry virgin representing the justice and abundance of a once and future golden age first comes to the New World with Columbus's voyage, it is through the association of Virgo-Astraea with Queen Elizabeth that this imagery first comes specifically to North America with the founding of the Virginia colony, named for the virgin queen. Crane positions *The Bridge* between these two sources of imagery as he sets out to "build / The Virgin" out "of the seagull cries and wind . . . on this strange shore." He begins "To Brooklyn Bridge" with the image of a seagull circling, and then soaring out of sight beyond, the Statue of Liberty, and then immediately shifts his attention to that other monumental structure across the harbor whose suspended balance of opposing forces, of steel cables under horizontal tension and stone towers under vertical compression, is the functional embodiment of that symbolic balancing of freedom and restraint figured in the image of the soaring bird and the stationary statue, a pairing of concepts reiterated in the night sky by the contiguity of the constellations Libra (the Balance) and Virgo (the Virgin). Not unpredictably, this initial pairing of the bridge and the Statue of Liberty (with its Virgo-Astraea resonances) leads within a few stanzas to Crane's describing the bridge in imagery associated with the Virgin Mary. Watching night descend on the bridge, the poetic quester says, "*Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift / Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars, / Beading thy path—condense eternity: / And we have seen night lifted in thine arms*" (34).

The traffic lights on the bridge and the lights strung from its cables are figuratively represented as beads on a rosary (Crane explicitly invokes the image of the rosary in "The River"), and appropriately so since "To Brooklyn Bridge" leads into "Ave Maria" (the name of the principal prayer said on the rosary beads), in which Columbus, from the bridge of a ship named for the Virgin, prays to Mary for safe return. The phrase "immaculate sigh of stars" links the points of electric light beading the bridge's path to the points of starlight in the night sky seen through the bridge's cables (most probably the starry points forming the constellation Virgo, a figure that, as we saw, was interpreted in the middle ages as the Madonna and Child). Certainly, the phrase "immaculate sigh of stars" is also meant to evoke the Virgin's "immaculate conception" (officially proclaimed as a dogma of faith in 1854). It also recalls the most famous representation of Mary's first appearance in the New World (the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, miraculously imprinted on the mantle of a converted Indian named Juan Diego, to whom she had appeared in 1531 near Tepeyac in Mexico), a representation showing the Virgin as an Indian maiden wearing a crown of seven stars and standing on a crescent moon. (Recall in this regard that the Statue of Liberty wears "the diadem of the sun god Helios" with seven spikes or rays extending from it [Warner 48].) As the image of the Madonna and Child represents the historical intersection of the temporal and eternal, the

human and divine, so Crane evokes the temporal flux of the traffic lights beading the bridge's path seen against the background of the eternal stars as an image that, like the infant Jesus raised in the Madonna's arms, seems to "condense eternity," the bridge's "arms" being its twin masonry towers between which the starry night is held and whose Gothic arches evoke a cathedral. And what adds to Crane's figuration of the Bridge in terms of Madonna and Child is that Mary was traditionally imaged in Christianity as the bridge between God and man, the "Mediatrix of All Grace" being one of her titles in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

Building on the Virgo-Astraea resonances of the Statue of Liberty and his Marian evocation of Brooklyn Bridge, Crane continues his work of elaborating the triple archetype by adding associations of Demeter and Korē to the figure of Pocahontas. In "Ave Maria," for example, Columbus—after having prayed "O Madre Maria . . . grantest safe returning; / Assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue!" and intoned the Angelus (the prayer commemorating the Annunciation) at the cross of the furled mast—sees the sky's blue mantle darken with nightfall and finds God immanent in His starry heavens. Columbus imagines these heavens as a new field of discovery like that grain-rich New World he has just found: "Hushed gleaming fields and pendant seething wheat / Of knowledge—round thy brows unhooded now / —The kindled Crown!" (37). The starry crown Columbus sees in the sky is the constellation Corona Borealis (the Northern Crown, known to the ancients as Ariadne's Crown), and its proximity to the constellation Virgo no doubt explains his evoking the night sky and its harvest of stars as fields of wheat—the Christian identification of Virgo with Madonna and Child giving way to reveal the classical substratum linking the constellation with Demeter and Korē, the divine child in Mary's arms become again the stalk of wheat in the Mother's hand. As we noted earlier, this association of the virgin figure with an agricultural goddess continues in "The Dance," where Crane identifies the maiden Pocahontas with the Indian Corn Mother, describing her as "the glacier woman" whom the chieftain Maquokeeta "squired . . . down the sky" (almost as if she were Virgo returned from the heavens), the woman who in spring "spouted arms" and "rose with maize—to die" (45).

In the first half of *The Bridge*, the Virgo-Astraea resonances surrounding Crane's project of building the virgin are mainly associated with the Virgin Mary, but in the second half, as Crane evokes the "submerging" of an older, idealized, agricultural America by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American industrialization, the Virgo-Astraea imagery seems to be drawn less from the figure of a heavenly queen than from a worldly queen ruling a commercial empire, the virgin Elizabeth I. As we saw, Crane begins tracing the submergence of this older America in "Indiana," and, just as the farmer's relationship to mother earth changes from cultivation to exploitation, so that change is reflected in the alteration of the mother archetype in the poem: in the farm mother's possessive attempt to keep her son at home. But the abandonment of the soil has already been transmitted from one generation to the next, and the old sailor of "Cutty

Sark" who "can't live on land" (52) is either the runaway son of "Indiana" grown older or his symbolic equivalent.

This imagery of an original, fruitful land submerged beneath the machinery of the modern world continues in "Cape Hatteras" in Crane's description of "our native clay / Whose depth of red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas— / Those continental folded aeons, surcharged / With sweetness below derricks, chimneys, tunnels— / Is veined by all that time has really pledged us" (54). This landscape of "second timber" and "abandoned pastures" is now a place "Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky, / Under the looming stacks of the gigantic powerhouse" and its "velvet" hum "of dynamos" (55). The next ten lines, among the most energetic and lyrically risky in the poem, are Crane's evocation of the dynamo as a symbol of a new world of physical force, that prophecy written in "power's script" (55), with its promise of "new verities, new inklings" and its danger of a blind, inhuman physical motion, chaotic and self-destructive. But this evocation of the dynamo, read in relation to that earlier image of Pocahontas's submerged "red, eternal flesh," is also, I would suggest, an antithetical allusion to the Virgin.

§ 12
The Education of Henry Adams; Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"; Wandering between Two Worlds; Seneca's *Medea*; Whitman and the Rebound Seed

Like a good many of his contemporaries, Crane had read *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918) and, to judge from "Cape Hatteras," had been influenced by one of the book's more memorable sections—chapter 25, "The Dynamo and the Virgin," Adams's meditation in the Gallery of Machines at the 1900 Paris Exposition on the history of "the development or economy of forces" (379). Adams saw the Virgin and the dynamo as symbolizing, respectively, the poles of human and mechanical energy. For Adams "the dynamo became a symbol of the infinite" (380) presenting him with the troubling possibility that, as his friend the physicist Samuel Langley argued, "the new forces were anarchical" (381), in particular, those of atomic physics opened up by the discovery of x-rays. Where the atom had once "figured only as a fiction of thought," man had, with the discovery of x-rays, "translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old. He had entered a supersensual world, in which he could measure nothing except by chance collisions of movements . . . Langley seemed prepared for anything, even for an indeterminable number of universes interfused—physics stark mad in metaphysics" (381–82). Or, as Crane says in "Cape Hatteras," "Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact / From which we wake into the dream of act; / Seeing himself an atom in a shroud— / Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!" (55).

In contrast to the supersensual reality of random motion (best described by the kinetic theory of gases and the law of entropy), the Western world-

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In contrast to the supersensual reality of random motion (best described by the kinetic theory of gases and the law of entropy), the Western world-

view in the thirteenth century had envisioned a supersensual reality whose motive force was love and whose visible expression was the Virgin: "Symbol or energy, the Virgin acted as the greatest force the Western world ever felt" (388), and her force

> was still felt at Lourdes, and seemed to be as potent as x-rays; but in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force—at most as sentiment . . . The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, not merely as a sentiment, but as a force. Why was she unknown in America? For evidently America was ashamed of her, and she was ashamed of herself, otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so profusely all over her. When she was a true force, she was ignorant of fig-leaves, but the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam. (383–84)

Though anyone "brought up among Puritans," says Adams, "knew that sex was sin, . . . in any previous age, sex was strength." The Woman had never been worshipped for her beauty: "She was goddess because of her force; she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies" (384). And yet, Adams must admit, "All this was to American thought as though it had never existed . . . At the Louvre and at Chartres, as he knew by the record of the work actually done . . . , was the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifths of his noblest art, . . . and yet this energy was unknown to the American mind. An American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist" (384–85).

It is as if Crane's project in *The Bridge* (explicitly announced in "To Liberty") of building the virgin "on this strange shore" were in direct response to Adams's claim that she "was . . . unknown in America," an energy "unknown to the American mind." For, as Crane says of the idealized female figure he projects in "To Liberty," "They have not seen her in this harbor" (125). And it is also as if Crane's exhortation to "bring her no robes yet" (125) were in response to Adams's remark that "evidently America was ashamed of her, . . . otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so profusely all over her."

Adams continues his meditation on the American ignorance of the Woman's sexual force by "asking himself whether he knew of any American artist who had ever insisted on the power of sex, as every classic had always done; but he could think only of Walt Whitman" (385). Whitman is, of course, the central dramatic figure in "Cape Hatteras," placed midway between the image of the submerged flesh of the American virgin-continent and that of the blind mechanical force of the dynamo, as a kind of nineteenth-century psychopomp helping the poetic quester find his way between these two worlds of human and inhuman energy. Indeed, the epigraph to "Cape Hatteras," taken from Whitman's "Passage to India," evokes the poetic quester as the younger brother who, once the seas are "all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done, . . . melts in fondness" in the arms of "the Elder Brother" (Whitman 293). And later in "Cape Hat-

teras" he characterizes Whitman's magisterial role in American poetry, as we have seen, by addressing him as "Our Meistersinger" (59).

In "The Virgin and the Dynamo," Adams seems to invoke Whitman's centripetal/centrifugal imagery from section 43 of *Song of Myself* to describe the opposition between Adams's two symbols of power, the Virgin a centripetal force of human love and reproductive energy that "had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power" (388), exercising "vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of" (385) and the dynamo a centrifugal force of inhuman, "anarchical" (381) energy before which, in Yeats's words, "the centre cannot hold" and "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." Crane replicates this centripetal/centrifugal imagery when, on the one hand, he evokes the American Virgin/Venus, Pocahontas, in the epigraph to "Powhatan's Daughter," as "*a well-featured but wanton yong girle*" who would "*get the boyes forth with her into the market place, and make them wheele, falling on their hands, turning their heels upwards, whom she would follow, and wheele so herself, naked as she was, all the fort over*" (38) and when, on the other hand, he climaxes his maniacal description of the dynamo by invoking its "whirling armatures" and glinting "bearings . . . murmurless and shined / In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!" (56).

The cartwheeling naked virgin whose sexual force gathers the boys about her and the dynamo's whirling turbine blindly generating electric power are figures respectively of a human order organized about a center and an entropic physical energy thrown off from a center. In Adams's terms they are figures as well of two different worlds between which he is caught, an old world of belief in whose culture he was raised and a new world of scientific knowledge and technological-commercial dominance into which he has survived. Adams evokes this sense of being between worlds when he remarks of his friend Augustus St. Gaudens that the American sculptor had never felt "the Virgin or Venus as force," as a "symbol of power" like "the railway train," in the way that Adams had felt "the female energy" at Chartres: "St. Gaudens at Amiens was hardly less sensitive to the force of the female energy than Matthew Arnold at the Grande Chartreuse" (388). Adams meant the latter reference to recall, in relation to its context, the most famous lines from Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." The poem's dramatic speaker, whose youthful education has deprived him of his faith but not of his concern for questions of life's meaning and value, visits the famous mother house near Grenoble of an order of Carthusian monks. Filled with a feeling of melancholy, he says, "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born, / With nowhere yet to rest my head, / Like these on earth I wait forlorn. / Their faith, my tears, the world deride— / I come to shed them at their side" (216).

In "Ave Maria" Crane adapts the Arnoldian-Adamsian trope of wandering between worlds to the figure of the returning voyager Columbus, who says in mid-ocean, "Here between two worlds, another, harsh, // This third, of water, tests the word" (36). Columbus is quite literally between the Old World of religious belief (as whose representative he has sailed in

a ship named for the Virgin) and the New World, whose discovery inaugurates an era of geographic exploration and attendant scientific advances that will ultimately undermine the Old World's faith. But unlike Arnold in the nineteenth century and Adams in the twentieth, Crane's Columbus is still close enough to that old world to see God immanent in His starry heavens. And in "Cape Hatteras" Crane evokes Whitman as yet another such voyager.

In echoing Arnold's image in Columbus's monologue, Crane aims to set off a series of poetic echoes within *The Bridge,* as well as within the texts that are its allusive backgrounds, echoes having to do with the passing of one era and the coming of another, the loss of an old world and the opening up of a new. The first of these is in the Latin epigraph to "Ave Maria" as it appeared in the first American edition (published by Liveright in 1930 and in all subsequent editions of *The Bridge* until that of Marc Simon in 1986):

> Venient annis, saecula seris,
> Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum
> Laxet et ingens pateat tellus
> Tiphysque novos detegat orbes
> Nec sit terris ultima Thule.
>
> —Seneca

The passage, from Seneca's tragedy *Medea,* ends a lengthy account, given by the chorus, of the first ship's initial voyage, Jason's quest in the Argo for the Golden Fleece. Though the play's action is confined to the day on which Jason, having cast off his wife Medea and their two sons, is to wed Creusa, the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, the continuing background to the day's events is the story of the Argonauts' voyage, which led to the original meeting of Jason and Medea and to Medea's sacrificing father, brother, and homeland for Jason's love. The passage cited by Crane concludes the Argo's story with a prophecy: "There will come an age in the far-off years when Ocean shall unloose the bonds of things, when the whole broad earth shall be revealed, when Tiphys shall disclose new worlds and Thule not be the limit of the lands"—a prophecy appropriate to Columbus's discovery of the New World and one in fact historically linked to that discovery.

One of the books Crane read in preparation for writing *The Bridge* was *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus* by his son Ferdinand. In chapter 7, Ferdinand says that one reason his father embarked on his journey to the Indies "was the authority of many learned men who said that one could sail westward from . . . Spain to the eastern end of India, and that no great sea lay between" (Colon 17). Ferdinand notes that among those whose writings his father had consulted were Aristotle, Averroes, and "Seneca, in the first book of his *Natural Questions*" (17). Ferdinand continues, "If, as some believe, this Seneca wrote the tragedies attributed to him, we may say that it was apropos of this that he wrote in the chorus of his tragedy *Medea* '. . . venient annis secula seris' [etc.]," citing in his text the passage Crane used as the epigraph to "Ave Maria." Ferdinand concludes, "Now it is con-

sidered certain that this prophecy was fulfilled in the person of the Admiral" (18).

We can be fairly certain that Crane took the Seneca quotation from Ferdinand's account because in citing Seneca Ferdinand misquotes a word and Crane reproduces that slip in his epigraph. In Ferdinand's version the chorus says that in the coming age "Ocean shall unloose the bonds of things" (Oceanus vincula rerum laxet) and "Tiphys shall disclose new worlds" (Tiphysque novos detegat orbes). The titan Ocean or Oceanus, the son of Uranus (sky) and Ge (earth), was the ancient god of the water, predating Poseidon, and "in Homer Oceanus is the river encircling the whole world" (*Oxford* 744). Appropriately, then, Oceanus, as the river that bounds the world, is evoked in the prophecy as enlarging that limit, and, equally appropriately, Tiphys, the steersman of the Argo, is depicted as disclosing new worlds.

The only difficulty is that that is not what Seneca wrote. Seneca's line reads "Tethysque novos detegat orbes." The titaness Tethys, sister and consort of Oceanus, was the ancient goddess of the water, and she and Oceanus were the parents of all the gods of earth's rivers. Though the Argo's pilot Tiphys is mentioned frequently in the lengthy account of the Argonauts' voyage that leads up to these concluding lines, it is clear that the image Seneca meant to end with was not a parallelism of Ocean and Tiphys but of Ocean and Tethys, the god of the world-bounding river relaxing that watery limit so that his consort can reveal new worlds. Whether Ferdinand simply misremembered the line (substituting the name Tiphys because of the earlier references to him in the choral passage), or this was a mistake in his copy of Seneca's play, or whether he deliberately substituted the name of the Argo's steersman to make the quote more applicable to his father, the Great Navigator, it seems certain that in quoting the passage in this form Crane meant to allude to its specific application to Columbus by his son Ferdinand as a prophecy fulfilled in his father (one of the major structures that shapes *The Bridge* as a whole is, of course, prefiguration and fulfillment).[1] But it also seems certain, judging from a pattern of allusions and echoes in *The Bridge,* that Crane not only knew Seneca's *Medea* (there was a bilingual text of the play available in 1917 in the Loeb Classical Library) but was especially aware of the immediate context of the epigraph: the chorus's lengthy account of the Argo's voyage. For what that account makes clear is that the voyage of the first ship marked the boundary between a golden age of peace and plenty and a succeeding age of conquest and plunder.

The chorus describes as "too venturesome the man who in frail barque first cleft the treacherous sea" (Seneca 1:255), for before that voyage the world was at peace: "Unsullied the ages our fathers saw, with crime banished afar. Then every man inactive kept to his own shores and lived to old age on ancestral fields, rich with but little, knowing no wealth save what his home soil had yielded. Not yet could any read the sky and use the stars with which the heavens are spangled; nor yet could ships avoid the rainy Hyades" (1:257). But once "Tiphys made bold to spread his canvas

on the vasty deep and to write new laws for the winds," then "the lands, well separated before by nature's laws, the Thessalian ship made one, bade the deep suffer blows, and the sequestered sea become a part of our human fear" (1:257–59). In the wake of that first voyage, "any little craft now wanders at will upon the deep. All bounds have been removed, cities have set their walls in new lands, and the world, now passable throughout, has left nothing where it once had place: the Indian drinks of the cold Araxes, the Persians quaff the Elbe and the Rhine. There will come an age in the far-off years [etc.]" (1:259–61). The logic of this final group of images seems clear: As the spread of seagoing vessels has removed "all bounds" between one land and another, so people from one end of the known world travel to drink the water of rivers (those traditional natural boundaries between lands) located at the other end of the world; and in that same vein, Ocean and Tethys, the parents of all the world's river gods, are imagined as loosing that last boundary, the world-encircling river named for the former, and disclosing *terra incognita*.

In Seneca's play, then, the Argo's voyage is evoked as an act of Promethean transgression that increases the danger of the human condition (making "the sequestered sea become a part of our human fear"), no matter how much it ultimately increases the possibilities of that condition. As with Prometheus's theft of fire, whatever the benefits for mankind of conquering the sea in ships, the original transgressors of that boundary must be punished. The chorus makes this clear later in the play when it recounts the fates of the various Argonauts, noting that all those who sailed in the Argo "by a dreadful end atoned for the sea's outraged laws" (1:283). And they conclude, "Enough now, ye gods, have ye avenged the sea; spare him [Jason] who was ordered to the task" (1:287). But the fates do not spare Jason: Medea kills Jason's prospective wife and father-in-law with poisoned robes and then slays her two sons by Jason before departing in a dragon-borne car. One can only wonder how much this subtext of a mother who kills her sons to take revenge on her husband resonated in the personal considerations underlying Crane's shifting the dramatic speaker of "Indiana."

Seneca's plays are filled with echoes from Virgil and Ovid, and the chorus's characterization of the first ship's voyage as a primal transgression marking the boundary between an older age of peace and agricultural plenty and a succeeding one of conflict and seagoing commerce is an echo both of Ovid's account of the passing of the Golden Age in the *Metamorphoses* and of Virgil's prophecy of its cyclic return in the Fourth *Eclogue.* Ovid evokes the Golden Age as one in which not yet having embarked on "the watery plain to visit other lands; men knew no other shores except their own" (*Ovid* 3:9); in contrast is the Age of Iron, when "men now spread sails to the winds," so that "all evil burst forth into this age of baser vein: . . . tricks and plots and snares, violence and cursed love of gain" (3:11). In a similar vein Virgil in the Fourth *Eclogue,* though prophesying the Golden Age's recurrence, adds that "yet shall some few traces of olden sin lurk behind, to call men to essay the sea in ships, to gird towns with walls, and to cleave the earth with furrows. A second Tiphys shall then arise, and a

second Argo to carry chosen heroes; a second warfare, too, shall there be, and again shall a great Achilles be sent to Troy" (Virgil 1:31)—(the classical allusion behind Yeats's poem "No Second Troy").

What this network of allusions in Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca makes clear is that the image of Astraea's departure from earth with the coming of the Iron Age is structurally linked to the transgressive voyage of the Argo. Indeed, in the passage just quoted Virgil implies a direct connection between the Argo's voyage and the Trojan war: the original sea journey to bring back the golden fleece making possible, and pointing the way to, the thousand-ship overseas expedition to bring back the golden-haired Helen. What seems equally clear is that, in citing the prophetic passage about the Argo's voyage, Crane not only knew that Columbus had read these lines, and that his son Ferdinand had considered their prophecy fulfilled in his father, but also knew the network of allusions linking the Argo's voyage to the departure of Astraea. For Crane means to invoke this link between the first ship's voyage and the flight of the classical Virgo to the heavens as an allusive background to Columbus's journey and his plea to the Christian Virgo (whose presence is manifested in the blue mantle of the sky) to let him return home safely—as if Columbus's journey were a cyclic repetition of Jason's original one, a return that initiates an era of Spanish plundering of the New World.

I would further argue that, in echoing Matthew Arnold's line "Wandering between two worlds" with Columbus's "Here between two worlds," Crane intends us to hear another echo between the prophetic epigraph from Seneca's *Medea* ("There will come an age in the far-off years when Ocean shall unloose the bonds of things," etc.) and that prophetic portion of Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" that begins, "Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age, / More fortunate, alas! than we, / Which without hardness will be sage, / And gay without frivolity. / Sons of the world, oh, speed those years; / But while we wait, allow our tears!" (Arnold 218). Certainly no prophecy of the cyclic return of a Golden Age, though the poet clearly means us to hear these lines against the background of Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue,* its exhortation to the divine child to be born soon and restore the Golden Age resonating beneath Arnold's "Sons of the world, oh, speed those years." The point of Arnold's antithetical allusion is that the Fourth *Eclogue* prophesied the coming of the Roman Empire to which Virgil looked forward with enthusiasm, but Arnold's prophecy—published in 1855 and also written in the shadow of a coming empire, most obviously, the British, but in a larger sense that secular empire of science and technology, of industry and commerce, which the nineteenth century ushers in—envisions an imperial era he clearly does not look forward to, admonishing the "sons of the world" that though "we admire with awe / The exulting thunder of your race; / . . . Your triumph over time and space! / Your pride of life, your tireless powers," still in all "they are not ours" (Arnold 218–19).

Crane underlines the echo of Seneca's prophetic "There will come an age in the far-off years" by Arnold's "Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age" (an echo confirmed by the allusion to "Stanzas from the Grande

Chartreuse" in "Ave Maria") by reechoing this rhetorical figure in "Cape Hatteras." There the poetic quester invokes Whitman as his guide by quoting the opening of a Whitman poem: "'—Recorders ages hence'—ah, syllables of faith! / Walt, tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity / Be still the same as when you walked the beach / Near Paumanok—your lone patrol" (55). In "Recorders Ages Hence," from the *Calamus* poems, Whitman, addressing readers of the future, tells them what to say of him: that he was one who, though he "often walk'd lonesome walks," spent his "happiest days . . . far away through fields, in woods, on hills" with a friend and lover "wandering hand in hand, . . . apart from other men" (Whitman 90). The most famous of Whitman's "lonesome walks" along a beach (to which Crane alludes) is that in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." But if what "Recorders Ages Hence" affirms is that Whitman was happiest not walking alone but hand in hand with another person, either friend or lover, then the relationship Crane projects between his alter ego (the poetic quester) and Whitman in "Cape Hatteras" makes "Recorders Ages Hence" seem like a prophecy fulfilled in the way Whitman's persona and poetry serve to mentor the quester. As we noted earlier, Crane uses the epigraph to "Cape Hatteras" to evoke the roles of the nineteenth-century poet and the twentieth-century quester as those of elder and younger brother, the prophetic elder conducting the younger as if leading him by the hand, an image Crane reiterates in the final lines of "Cape Hatteras": "Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear / In their own veins uncancelled thy sure tread . . . / yes, Walt, / Afoot again, and onward without halt,— / Not soon, nor suddenly,—no, never to let go / My hand / in yours, / Walt Whitman— / so—" (60)—an ending that alludes as well to the opening line of Whitman's "Salut au Monde": "O take my hand Walt Whitman!" (Whitman 100). And given that Columbus and Whitman occupy analogous positions within *The Bridge* as the discoverers of the physical and the metaphysical New Worlds, the fulfillment of Whitman's prophecy from "Recorders Ages Hence" in the relationship evoked in "Cape Hatteras" corresponds to the fulfillment of Seneca's prophetic epigraph to "Ave Maria" in Columbus's voyage.

As the poetic quester's guide between two worlds, Whitman, whose future-oriented philosophy of the Open Road underpins Crane's celebratory yet admonitory evocations of air and space travel in "Cape Hatteras," instructs him in the knowledge that was embodied for the classical world in the figures of Demeter and Korē (the inexhaustible fertility-virginity of the land and the persistence of life through death), knowledge that the quester needs in order to make his symbolic descent into the underworld in "The Tunnel" without succumbing to despair. But unlike Demeter-Korē's, Whitman's emblem of natural resurrection was not barley or wheat but the grass that gave its name to his poetic life's work. As Crane says, "O, something green, / Beyond all sesames of science was thy choice" when you (Whitman) "to the greensward knelt" (59):

> O Walt!—Ascensions of thee hover in me now
> As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed

With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!
The competent loam, the probable grass . . .
O, upward from the dead
Thou bringest tally, and a pact, new bound
Of living brotherhood! (58)

The image of "the rebound seed" evokes the figure of Korē as the seed-corn and inflects that earlier image (from the marginal note to "Harbor Dawn") of the poetic quester merging his "seed" (38) with the visionary woman.

This seed imagery also amplifies the resonances of the line "Beyond all sesames of science was thy choice" considered as a reference to Whitman's choosing the grass as his symbol of the ubiquitous persistence of life. For though the line initially signifies by alluding to the phrase "Open, Sesame" from the tale of Ali Baba and the forty thieves in *The Thousand and One Nights* (that is, by evoking the notion of a magic word or formula that opens a hidden space or unlocks a secret, much as a scientific formula might be said to do), the line's deeper meaning depends on the fact that *sesame* is also the name of a grain seed and of a grass. In his translation of *The Thousand and One Nights,* Richard Burton notes that the word in the magic formula is indeed the name of the grain "*Sesamum Orientale*" and that "the term is cabalistical" in this context (14:370). An incident in the tale perhaps sheds more light on the word's magical background. Ali Baba happens to observe the forty thieves as they are returning to the place where they hide their loot. The leader of the band approaches a towering rock, speaks the magic formula, and a wide opening appears in the rock face leading to a cavern. After the robbers leave, Ali Baba uses the words "Open, Sesame" to gain entrance to the cavern and makes off with several sacks of gold. Ali Baba's brother Kasim, learning of his sibling's new wealth, forces him to tell the secret of the cave under threat of exposure to the authorities. Kasim then gains entrance to the cavern using the magic words and gathers up sacks of gold, but when it comes time to leave "he had clean forgotten the cabalistic words and cried out, 'Open, O Barley!' whereat the door refused to move. Astonished and confused beyond measure, he named the names of all manner of grains save sesame, which had slipped from his memory as though he had never heard the word" (Burton 14:375). Unable to escape from the cavern, Kasim is discovered by the returning robbers and slain.

Given that in mythology and folklore caves are traditionally entrances to the underworld, the notion of saying the name of a grain seed (a figure of natural resurrection) as a means of opening the door of a cave and releasing someone within suggests that the word *sesame*'s cabalistic aura may have derived from some cultural memory, or Middle Eastern variation, of the rites of Demeter and Korē. The first grain Kasim names when he tries to leave the cave is barley, the grain associated with the rites of the Mother and the Daughter at Eleusis. The rites of Demeter and Korē often involved a real or symbolic cavern, as in the grotto of Pluto at Eleusis. Indeed, the notion that the name of a grain seed (a metonym for the self-resurrecting goddess of the underworld) is a magic formula for exiting

a cave bears a structural resemblance, as we saw, to the *Aeneid* episode in which the Cumaean Sibyl tells Aeneas that though it is easy to enter the underworld, if he wishes to return he must carry with him a golden-leafed bough (in Latin a "golden-haired offspring") from a tree sacred to Proserpina, which she has "ordained to be borne to her as her own gift" (1:517), no doubt as a symbol of her own periodic returns from the underworld with the sprouting grain.

This notion cannot help but recall as well the more familiar imagery of supernatural resurrection associated with Christ's exiting the tomb on Easter morning, and particularly so since Paul applies the grain-seed imagery to Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. Crane had this imagery in mind when he described Whitman's choice of the grass as something "beyond all sesames of science," for only five lines later Crane associates Whitman's notion of the American higher consciousness with the imagery of Easter, evokes it as a rising from the dark underworld to the light that prefigures a further ascension from this world to those beyond as man pursues his destiny among the stars (recall that earlier in the poem the quester had addressed Whitman "O Walt!—Ascensions of thee hover in me now" [58]): "And now, as launched in abysmal cupolas of space, / Toward endless terminals, Easters of speeding light— / Vast engines outward veering with seraphic grace / On clarion cylinders pass out of sight / To course that span of consciousness thou'st named / The Open Road—thy vision is reclaimed!" (59).

§ 13
"Three Songs"; Golden Hair; "Quaker Hill" and the Motherly Artist; the Return of the Golden Age; Astraea and Atlantis

The figure of the dead Whitman, whose spirit lives on in his writings, rising up from the world of the dead (that submerged realm of "our native clay" buried beneath the machinery of the modern world) to lead the poetic quester from the present into the future, fits into a larger pattern of imagery in the poem's second half: imagery that depicts structures from the past persisting into the present. The most obvious example is the survival of that conjoined symbol of the Indians' "nature-world," the eagle and the serpent—a symbol specifically linked to Pocahontas as virgin continent ("Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair" [43])—that persists in the modern, mechanical forms of the eagle-airplane of "Cape Hatteras" and the serpent-train of "The River" and "The Tunnel."

Another example, as regards our discussion of Virgo-Astraea symbolism, is Crane's modern version of the ancient triple archetype of virgin-mother-lover in the "Three Songs." Devoting a song to each of the roles, Crane personifies the three in the first song, "Southern Cross," under the names Eve, Magdalene, and Mary and then focuses the rest of that poem

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on the mother archetype, creating an image that obliquely recalls aspects of Hart's relationship to Grace. In the second, "National Winter Garden," he evokes the figure of the promiscuous lover or prostitute in the person of a Minsky burlesque dancer, and in the third, "Virginia," he depicts the modern "office virgin," a girl named Mary whose boyfriend waits for her to get off work on Saturday afternoon and meet him for a date: "O rain at seven, / Pay-check at eleven— / Keep smiling the boss away, / Mary (what are you going to do?) / Gone seven—gone eleven, / And I'm still waiting you— // O blue-eyed Mary with the claret scarf, / Saturday Mary, mine!" (63). The situation of the poem is perhaps less clear nowadays when office workers no longer routinely work half a day on Saturdays as they did in the 1920s, but obviously Mary is late for a Saturday afternoon date. Her boyfriend's question—not the expected "Mary, where are you?" but the more problematic "Mary (what are you going to do?)"—suggests that Mary has to choose between spending the rest of the day with the boss (whom the speaker urges her to "keep smiling . . . away") or with the speaker, presumably a choice between which man she will give up her virginity to. Indeed, this sense of the situation gives an added resonance to one of those snippets of coarse innuendo the quester overhears on his subway journey in "The Tunnel": "'But I want service in this office SERVICE / I said—after / the show she cried a little afterwards but—'" (69). And in the second stanza of "Virginia," Mary's boyfriend makes clear *his* plans for their afternoon when he remarks that it is "Spring in Prince Street / Where green figs gleam / By oyster shells!" (63), green figs and oysters being traditional aphrodisiacs.

Since Mary has apparently been kept working late by her boss, the situation bears a structural resemblance to Korē's imprisonment in the underworld by Pluto. That Crane associated the name *Pluto* with the American passion for business can be judged from his 1923 poem "America's Plutonic Ecstasies," written in the style of e. e. cummings, with a central metaphor based on the Freudian identification of money and excrement. (Interestingly enough, Crane makes an ironic, obscene reference to Whitman's "Passage to India" in the poem's last stanza, evoking the notion of free passage in terms of a bowel movement.) If the myth of Pluto's entrapment of Korē is layered beneath the action of "Virginia," then the speaker's references to wheat and golden hair in the refrain following the second stanza become clearer: "O Mary, leaning from your high wheat tower, / Let down your golden hair!" (63).

Crane has, of course, mingled in these lines details from two other stories of a maiden's entrapment, stories taken from Grimm's Fairy Tales—those of Rapunzel and Rumpelstiltskin. Recall that Rapunzel, who "had magnificent long hair, fine as spun gold," was imprisoned in a tower with "neither stairs nor door" by an enchantress, and that when the king's son rode by the tower, heard her singing, and tried to meet her, he had to stand beneath her window and call out, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, / Let down your hair" until the maiden lowered her golden braids for him to climb up to her window (*Complete Grimm's* 74–75). Eventually, he impregnates her on one of his nocturnal visits and after a series of further adventures marries her.

Similarly, in the tale of Rumpelstiltskin, a miller's daughter is imprisoned on three successive nights in progressively larger rooms filled with straw because the miller has bragged to the king that his daughter could spin straw into gold. Each night the king threatens to put her to death if she hasn't turned the straw to gold by dawn, and each night she is aided by a strange little man named Rumpelstiltskin, who does the spinning. After the third night the king marries the miller's daughter, thinking "I could not find a richer wife in the whole world" (266).

Clearly, Crane's office virgin must choose between the same alternatives as the golden-haired Rapunzel, imprisoned in her tower and eventually rescued by her young lover, and the miller's daughter, whose ultimate relationship with the older man who imprisons her is based on coercion and the getting of wealth. But, as we have said, lying beneath these two folk tales is the myth of Pluto and Korē and her annual return from the underworld in the spring with the sprouting of the grain, hence the speaker's references in "Virginia" to his girlfriend's "high wheat tower" and to the fact that it is "Spring in Prince Street" where her boyfriend awaits. (Recall that Rapunzel's lover was a prince.)

As we noted earlier, in the second half of *The Bridge,* where Crane evokes the "submerging" of an older, agricultural America by the land's industrialization, the Virgo-Astraea imagery is drawn less from a heavenly than from a worldly virgin, England's Elizabeth I, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the third of the "Three Songs." Crane named only two sections of *The Bridge* after states—"Indiana" and "Virginia"—and in each case the title evokes (as proper names often do in his poem) the persistence of an element from America's past in the present state of the nation: in the case of "Indiana," the dispossession of the Indians by the whites as well as that further dispossession that occurred when white farmers gave up cultivating the land to search for gold, and in "Virginia" the original colonization of North America under the aegis of a worldly virgin queen and specifically the colonization of the region where the historical Pocahontas lived and of which her father Powhatan was chief. The persistence of this commercial aspect of American "virginity" is suggested by the possibility that Mary is late because she has opted for an affair with her boss, a more financially advantageous liaison. The poem's last lines hold this possibility in balance as the boyfriend exhorts his absent girl: "Out of the way-up nickel-dime tower shine, / Cathedral Mary, / shine!—" (63). Though the speaker seems at first glance to evoke his Mary in imagery of the Blessed Virgin, the cathedral she occupies is in fact a New York office building (the Woolworth Building, nicknamed in the 1920s the "nickel-dime cathedral" because of its elaborate Gothic ornamentation and the nature of Woolworth's business). The notion that this wise virgin has made her choice in terms of nickels and dimes tends, as we noted earlier, to be reinforced by the snippet of conversation overheard on the subway, in which someone, clearly a boss, describes how he pressured a young female office worker into sex.

The allusions, explicit and implicit, to various female figures in the

"Three Songs" are meant to make the reader measure the distance *The Bridge* has traversed from the linked images of the Blessed Virgin in Columbus's prayer and the idealized Pocahontas as Indian Corn Mother in the quester's dream. With their degraded versions of the triple archetype, the "Three Songs" represent the low point in the quester's pursuit of a personified feminine ideal symbolizing an inexhaustible, because ultimately inviolable, national origin: that "red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas" (54), which, says the quester, remains "virgin to the last of men" (48). But the two sections immediately following "Three Songs" put the quester back on the path to recovering the power of that archetypal figure.

In "Quaker Hill" the images of Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan, the nineteenth-century virgin poetess and the twentieth-century courtesan-like dancer, represent a shift in the female archetype from being the passive object of desire to being the active subject of desire as artists. What both these women embody, however, is a form of the artist's active passivity, the suffering the serious artist must endure and the concomitant "patience that is armour and that shields / Love from despair—when love foresees the end" (66), patience that enables the quester to endure the despairing descent into the underworld of "The Tunnel" and its vision of Poe's suffering and death. Because the quester endures, he is granted the further imaginative vision of the "Wop washerwoman" (70), a vision of self-sacrificing motherhood that restores the quester's sense of the continuing efficacy of the triple archetype and of the viability of the fantasized return to the womb on the son's own terms considered as a master trope of artistic creativity.

Indeed, this fantasy of a total return on the son's own terms, with its attendant identification of mother and son, probably accounts as well for the fact that the artists invoked in the poem's second half as models of the quester's pursuit of the ideal are represented, to use Nietzsche's phrase from *The Gay Science,* as "the motherly human type," those "artists and people of 'works'" who "at every division of their lives, which are always divided by a work, . . . believe that they have reached their goal," who "would always patiently accept death with the feeling, 'now we are ripe for it.' This is not the expression of weariness—rather of a certain autumnal sunniness and mildness that the work itself, the fact that the work has become ripe, always leaves behind in the author" (337). Whether it is Whitman's association, as wielder of "the rebound seed," with the figures of Demeter and Korē or the evocation of his role as a nurse in the Civil War in "Cape Hatteras," or the suffering and patient endurance of Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan in "Quaker Hill" or the vision of Poe's sacrifice of himself for his art equated with the self-sacrificing mother's return to her children through the underworld in "The Tunnel," it seems clear that in elaborating the feminine ideal in *The Bridge,* in building the virgin on this strange shore, Crane was not simply recreating a symbol of that American ideal of the motherland's inexhaustible virginity but also creating the figure of the "motherly type" artist for whom this symbolic woman serves as muse.

For the moment suffice it to note that by as much as the imaginative vi-

sion of the immigrant mother in "The Tunnel" restores the quester's belief in the maternal ideal and thus leads to the imagery of the quester's rebirth to a higher state of consciousness as the subway train rises from the tunnel (a state in which he experiences the syncretic vision of the Bridge in "Atlantis"), the Virgo-Astraea figure and the Atlantis imagery coalesce in the poem's conclusion. For the former's flight to the heavens marks the end of the Golden Age and the world's decline into greed and violence; while the latter, described in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias* as a land of peace and abundance where Poseidon settled his sons by a mortal woman in that era when there were "as yet no ships and no seafaring" (Plato 1218), is sunk beneath the sea (Plato 1159–60) because its inhabitants had taken "the infection of wicked coveting and pride of power" (Plato 1224), forcing the gods to punish them. Astraea is, then, a personification of the Golden Age that existed in Atlantis before ships and seafaring, before greed and pillage. And with both the starry Astraea and the submerged Atlantis there is associated a future hope: that someday the one may return from the skies and the other rise from the sea, and the Golden Age be restored.

In associating these two sets of images with Pocahontas, Crane varies them to this extent: that while Pocahontas represents the unfallen "nature-world" of the Indians prior to the whites' arrival, it is not she who flees to the heavens with the coming of materialism but rather her Indian lover Maquokeeta, whose soul is translated into the Morning Star. Pocahontas is associated instead with the Atlantis imagery of submergence, associated with an older, agricultural America sunk beneath the sea of commerce. Thus the climax of *The Bridge* prefigures an ultimate recovery of origins as a simultaneous rising from below and descent from above, a reappearance of Atlantis from beneath the waves and a return of a virgin from the heavens that structurally recapitulates the sacred marriage of above and below that Crane imagines in "The Dance," when the sky god descends upon the earth goddess in a rainstorm to raise the grain from beneath the earth and in so doing weds a people to a land.

§ 14
Epic Predecessors: Aeneas and Dido; Survival through a Part-Object; Stellar Translation and the Golden-Haired Grain

Just as Crane superimposes on the idealized object of the poem's quest (the virgin-continent Pocahontas) the images of various archetypal females, so he superimposes on the poetic quester the images of earlier epic voyagers or seekers of the ideal. Some of these figures, such as Columbus and Whitman, are explicitly invoked in the text, while others, like Faust, are present in the poem in a less obvious way. To this latter category belongs another figure whom we have not yet discussed at any length but who is central to Crane's project of linking *The Bridge* to the epic tradition, a figure Crane himself explicitly invokes in that same 1927 letter to Otto Kahn

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in which he makes the Sistine analogy. Toward the end of the letter, he notes, "*The Aeneid* was not written in two years—nor in four, and in more than one sense I feel justified in comparing the historic and cultural scope of *The Bridge* to that great work" (558). That Crane should compare his epic of modern America to Virgil's epic of ancient Rome might seem at first glance simply an indication of the reach of his poetic ambition, but that he should claim this comparison was justified "in more than one sense" because of his poem's "historic and cultural scope" suggests a more direct structural influence. Indeed, I would argue that *The Bridge*'s two principal epic incidents—"The Dance"'s sacred marriage in a thunderstorm and "The Tunnel"'s descent into the symbolic underworld of the subway—take as their classical models two similar episodes in the *Aeneid*: the mating of Aeneas and Dido in a rainstorm in Book 4 and Aeneas's descent into the underworld, in the company of the Cumaean Sibyl, in Book 6.

That Crane compares *The Bridge* to the *Aeneid* in the same letter in which he likens the relationship among the poem's sections to that of the Sistine paintings seems predictable enough, given the long-standing connection between these paintings and the Roman epic. As Virgil's poem had been the great verbal gathering together of the images of origins and ends in pagan, imperial Rome, so the Sistine paintings were the great visual gathering together of these images in Christian, papal Rome—the origin of the universe and of man depicted on the chapel's ceiling, the end of time on the wall behind the altar, and the parallel lives associated with the Old and the New Laws shown on the side walls. Of course, the story of Aeneas was a kind of Plutarchean parallel life *avant la lettre.* Although Virgil died some seventy years before Plutarch's birth, the formula of matching the life of a famous Roman with that of a famous Greek was implicit in Virgil's poem, Aeneas's voyage from the fallen Troy to found a new home being the Roman equivalent of Odysseus's homeward voyage to Ithaca from the fallen Troy.

Recall that the medieval Christian world considered Virgil as one of the just men who lived before Christ, indeed, regarded him as a kind of pre-Christian prophet of the Messiah's coming, largely on the basis of that Constantinian reading of the Fourth *Eclogue*; hence, Dante's choice of Virgil to be his guide into the underworld in *The Divine Comedy.* It was only appropriate that the poet who recounted the Cumaean Sibyl's conducting Aeneas into Proserpina's realm to receive from his father a prophetic vision of Rome's destiny should serve as Dante's conductor through the *Inferno,* as the Christian poet heads toward an ultimate vision of human destiny.

The link between the *Aeneid* and the Sistine paintings is explicitly suggested by a detail from Michelangelo's ceiling. As a border or frame to the scenes from Genesis that proceed down the center of the ceiling's west-east axis, Michelangelo depicts seven Old Testament figures (either prophets like Jeremiah or forerunners of Christ like Jonah) and five classical Sibyls or prophetesses. Among these latter, pagan figures, pride of place is clearly given to the Cumaean Sibyl whose picture is located at the midpoint of the northern side's border, between the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and

Daniel and facing that of the prophet Ezekiel (at the southern side's midpoint). The border's twelve figures reinforce the prophetic motif of prefiguration and fulfillment governing the parallel lives on the chapel's side walls. And, of course, the Cumaean Sibyl deserves her preferential position over the Persian, Eritrean, Delphic, and Libyan Sibyls (also depicted in the border) because it was she who led Aeneas to the vision of founding the city where the Sistine Chapel stands. Indeed, the association of Rome with a prophetic vision of origins in the *Aeneid* served in papal times to reinforce the parallel between the eternal city that was the center of Christianity and that city whose image in the book of Revelation represents a prophetic vision of time's end in eternity, the New Jerusalem whose descent from heaven figures the end as a return to origin in much the same way that the rising of the sunken Atlantis from beneath the ocean does within the secular mythology of *The Bridge.*

There are, of course, other allusions to the *Aeneid* in the Sistine Chapel and in the adjacent Vatican apartments, the most obvious of these in the chapel being the figure of Charon (in the lower right-hand portion of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*), who stands in his boat, with one foot on the gunwale and his oar drawn back menacingly above his right shoulder, forcing the damned souls he has ferried to hell to disembark. Michelangelo's depiction of Charon, apparently based on details from Book 6 of the *Aeneid* as filtered through Canto 3 of Dante's *Inferno,* emphasizes the ferryman's eyes, which Virgil describes as "staring orbs of flame" (1:527) and Dante, following suit, as "wheels of flame" and "glowing coals," as Charon beats "with his oar whoever lingers" (1:31). In the *Aeneid,* Charon at first refuses to ferry Aeneas across the river because "living bodies I may not carry in the Stygian boat" (1:533), but when the Cumaean Sibyl shows Charon the golden bough Aeneas has plucked, the boatman, "marvelling at the dread gift . . . so long unseen" (1:535), takes them into his craft. Similarly, in the *Inferno* when Charon refuses to ferry Dante into the world of the dead because the poet is still alive, Virgil tells the boatman that Dante's journey is the divine will, although as it turns out Dante ends up making that crossing not as a passenger in Charon's boat but by falling into a deep sleep at the end of Canto 3 and awakening on the other side of the Styx at the beginning of Canto 4.

A depiction of Aeneas himself is to be found not in the Sistine Chapel but a few steps away in the Raphael Stanzas, the suite of four rooms chosen by Pope Julius II Della Rovere as his residence when he succeeded Alexander VI Borgia, rooms frescoed by Raphael Sanzio between 1508 and 1524. In the so-called Stanza of the Borgo Fire, on which Raphael began work in 1514, a year after the death of Julius II, the subject of the frescoes was dictated by Julius's successor Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici). The paintings show "events from the lives of two Popes of the same name—Leo III and Leo IV bearing the features of Leo X" (*Michelangelo* 176), events with contemporary allusions. In the fresco that gives the stanza its name, Raphael depicts the Borgo Fire, which "occurred near the Vatican in 847 and was extinguished by the solemn blessing of Leo IV imparted from the

Vatican Palace. The edifice depicted is the old Constantinian Basilica with the mosaic facade; it was razed early in the 16th century to make room for the new St. Peter's on which Raphael (after Bramante) was working. Roman monuments are clearly in evidence, but the setting is Troy" (180). In the lower left-hand portion of the painting, Raphael, in one of his "most impressive efforts," illustrates "a passage from Virgil: the hero Aeneas flees the city carrying his father Anchises on his shoulders while his little son, Ascanius, scurries alongside them" (180). Just as the old Constantinian Basilica was razed to make way for the new St. Peter's, so the razing of an old city (Troy) led to the founding of a new one (Rome) by a Trojan refugee, making natural the assimilation of the Roman Borgo fire to the one that leveled Troy and thus the inclusion of Aeneas and his family in a depiction of the former event.

To appreciate the skill with which Crane adapted the two episodes from the *Aeneid* (with its Sistine associations) to his own purposes in *The Bridge,* we must recall how these episodes (the *hieros gamos* from Book 4 and the descent into the underworld from Book 6) fit into the overall structure of Virgil's poem. After fleeing the fallen Troy with his father, son, and a band of followers, Aeneas sails to the island of Delos, where he receives an oracle from Apollo that the Trojans must return to their original homeland: "Seek out your ancient mother," says the god (1:355), a line that would undoubtedly have had special resonance for Crane in his epic project. Aeneas's father Anchises believes that the founders of Troy originally came from Crete, and so they sail for that island where Aeneas establishes a city called Pergamea. But the city is soon struck by drought, and the gods of Troy appear to Aeneas in a dream to tell him that the ancient mother of the Trojan race was not Crete as Anchises thought but another country called by the Greeks "Hesperia," or the Western Land, and by its inhabitants "Italy."

Aeneas and his followers immediately reembark, and, after a series of further adventures, they arrive at the city of Buthrotum, ruled by "Priam's son, Helenus" (1:369). Helenus has the power of prophecy, and Aeneas asks him what dangers to avoid in making his way to Italy. Helenus pronounces a lengthy oracle in which he gives specific instructions for the voyage (e.g., avoid Scylla and Charybdis) and tells Aeneas that he must do two things: first, win over Juno by offerings and supplications, for without her consent he can never reach Italy; second, once he arrives in Italy, visit the Cumaean Sibyl in her rocky cavern and entreat her to respond to his questions. Rather than write words on leaves, as she usually does, "she herself [ought to] chant the oracles, and graciously open her lips in speech" (1:379). Helenus says that if Aeneas courts the Sibyl well, she will give him a fair passage.

Aeneas and his followers set sail for Italy. Though they follow Helenus's advice in avoiding Scylla and Charybdis, they anchor in the harbor of the Cyclopes and come upon a member of Ulysses's crew whom his comrades had left behind when they blinded the Cyclops Polyphemus and escaped from the harbor (the *Odyssey,* Book 9). As Virgil implicitly invokes the *Odyssey* as his own poem's precursor, so Crane follows an epic convention in incorporating structures and images from the *Aeneid* into *The Bridge,* a

convention he would have also found in Dante's use of Virgil in the *Inferno* and Goethe's use of the imagery from several classical epics in *Faust*. Clearly, Crane was more attracted to Aeneas's journey than to Ulysses's because, while Ulysses was a conqueror trying to return home from the destruction of a city, Aeneas was a survivor trying to reach a new land, found a city, and begin again, a story that obviously had greater resonance for the history of American colonization and immigration than that of Ulysses.

When Aeneas escapes the harbor of the Cyclopes, he takes Ulysses's crewman with him and continues his journey along the southern coast of Sicily to the city of Drepanum at the western end of the island. Here Anchises dies, and Aeneas sets sail for Italy, his final destination apparently in sight. At this point, where the actual narrative of the poem begins in Book 1, Aeneas's fleet is hit by a storm, his ships scattered, and he and his crew driven to the coast of North Africa near Carthage. Juno has sent the storm because of her undying enmity for the Trojans, and the remainder of Book 1 recounts how Aeneas's mother Venus first pleads with Jove to reaffirm his promise that Aeneas will reach Italy and then intercedes directly to insure that Juno plays no more tricks and that Aeneas and his followers are well received by the Carthaginians, even going so far as to send Cupid to make the Carthaginian queen Dido fall in love with Aeneas. Received with honor in Dido's court, Aeneas recounts to the queen in Book 2 the sack of Troy and in Book 3 his travels up to the time when the storm drove him ashore in North Africa.

In Book 4, Dido, now hopelessly in love with Aeneas, is on the point of forgoing her reputation as a chaste widow and giving herself to the stranger. Juno, observing the state to which Venus's and Cupid's wiles have reduced Dido, proposes to Venus that they make peace and share the sway of Carthage by arranging a marriage between Dido and Aeneas. Knowing that Juno's real purpose is to divert Aeneas from Italy but thinking it better to bide her time and trust Jove's promise, Venus agrees, and Juno offers to arrange matters. The next day while Dido and Aeneas are out hunting, Juno sends a sudden thunderstorm that scatters their retinues and drives the pair to seek shelter: "torrents rush down from the heights. To the same cave come Dido and the Trojan chief. Primal Earth and nuptial Juno give the sign; fires flashed in Heaven, the witness to their bridal, and on the mountain-top screamed the Nymphs. That day was the first day of death, that first the cause of woe. For no more is Dido swayed by fair show or fair fame, no more does she dream of a secret love: she calls it marriage and with that name veils her sin!" (1:407).

Virgil evokes this fatal mating of a queen and the son of a goddess with the imagery of a *hieros gamos* of earth and sky—the location in a cavern (reminiscent of the ritual marriage of king and queen as sun and moon, or in Roman lore, of Mars and Rhea Silvia), the invocation of Primaeval Earth, the image of the sky's connivance, the phallic lightning and the inseminating rain. Clearly, Crane, in depicting the conjunction of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, was attracted to this Virgilian scenario because like Virgil he intended his sacred marriage to be a fatal coupling.

When Aeneas is commanded by Jove to continue on his journey to Italy, he abandons Dido, and she, covered with shame, kills herself with Aeneas's sword, her body subsequently consumed on a funeral pyre whose flames Aeneas sees as he sails from the harbor. Thus, in both unions one of the partners dies a fiery death (Dido on a pyre, Maquokeeta at the stake), and both deaths foreshadow the ultimate eclipse of a people (the destruction of Carthage by Aeneas's Roman descendants in the Punic Wars, the subjugation of the Indians by the whites in the conquest of the Americas). Dido must endure a slow, difficult death because she has taken her own life in a fit of "sudden madness," and, consequently, "not yet had Proserpine taken from her head the golden lock and consigned her to Stygian Orcus" (1:443). Pitying Dido's suffering, Juno sends Iris from Olympus to cut a lock of Dido's hair as an "offering, sacred to Dis" (1:445) and release her from her body. Dido's shade then passes to a part of the underworld Virgil calls "the Mourning Fields" where "those whom stern Love has consumed with cruel wasting are hidden" (1:537), and it is there that Aeneas encounters her during his descent and tries to explain his actions, only to have Dido turn away in silent anger.

The detail of Dido's soul being released from her body by the cutting of "a golden lock from her head" ("flavum . . . vertice crinem," 1:442) in Book 4 is meant to resonate in the image from Book 6 of Aeneas's carrying a golden bough into the underworld as an offering to Proserpina. Virgil underlines the connection between the two moments by referring to the bough as "auricomos . . . fetus"—an association of images that connects a sacred marriage in a cavern to a descent through a cavern into the chthonic womb of the dark mother, in effect linking an image of godlike intercourse to the fantasy of a total return to the womb, a structure we will see more of later in analyzing Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*.

In the case of both immolated figures (Dido and Maquokeeta), survival beyond death is figured as a part-object (a body part as symbol of the self)—a lock of golden hair in the former case, an "eye" in the sky in the latter. Since in Maquokeeta's case Crane identifies the "'eye' in the sky" as specifically a star, this stellar translation of the chieftain recalls the classical tradition of astral transformations, as well as that further tradition of associating stellar phenomena with the image of flowing hair, most notably in the translation of the Egyptian queen Berenice's lock into the heavens as the constellation Coma Berenices. Hyginus in his *Poetica Astronomica* tells us that "when Ptolemy had married his sister Berenice [and] . . . had set out to attack Asia, Berenice vowed that if Ptolemy returned as victor she would clip off her hair. She placed the lock, consecrated by this vow, in the temple of Venus Arsinoe Zephyritis, but on the following day it couldn't be seen there. When the king was distressed by this, Conon the mathematician . . . , desiring to win the favor of the king, said that he had seen the lock among the constellations, and pointed out seven stars without definite configuration which he imagined were the lock" (214).

The asterism Coma Berenices (Berenice's Hair), the triangular-shaped group of seven stars near the tail of the constellation Leo, is celebrated

in Callimachus's fragmentary poem *Βερενικης πλόκαμος* and in its better-known Latin imitation, Catullus 66. In Catullus's version, the poem's speaker is Berenice's lock itself, enshrined in the heavens and recounting among other things how the astronomer Conon first spied it there, and how the lock had been conveyed to the bosom of Venus and placed by the goddess among the stars like Ariadne's golden crown. (The delicate, semicircular constellation of five stars known in the ancient world as Ariadne's Crown—because it was supposed to have been the diadem Dionysus gave Ariadne as his consort and that he subsequently translated into the starry heavens upon her death—is known nowadays as the Corona Borealis or Northern Crown, the same constellation that Crane has Columbus invoke in "Ave Maria": "round thy brows unhooded now / —The kindled Crown!" [37].) Berenice's speaking lock goes on to give its exact location among the constellations: "I, touching the fires of the Virgin and the raging Lion, and close by Callisto daughter of Lycaon, move to my setting" (Catullus 133), adding that with its setting at first light the constellation is "restored to gray Tethys," the sister/wife of Ocean.

Crane was familiar with Catullus's poetry. In a December 1919 letter to Gorham Munson, he mentions reading "a rare and wonderfully complete edition of Catullus" (221), and in a February 1920 letter to William Wright, he quotes a phrase from one of Catullus's epigrams (Weber, *Letters* 33). Further, given Crane's extensive knowledge of English poetry, we can be fairly sure he also knew the most famous citation of Berenice's lock in his native tongue, Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1714). In Pope's poem the enamored Baron clips one of Belinda's locks after Belinda has defeated him in a game of ombre at Hampton Court. Not only are the series of tricks in their card game described as mock-epic skirmishes between warriors, as in the *Iliad* or *Aeneid,* but the verbal encounters between partisan beaus and belles in the card room after the Baron steals the lock are evoked in the same manner. At the poem's end, Belinda, wielding a bodkin, forces the Baron to yield. He agrees to return the prize, but the lock is nowhere to be found:

> Some thought it mounted to the Lunar sphere, . . .
> But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,
> Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes:
> (So Rome's great founder to the heavens withdrew,
> To Proculus alone confessed in view)
> A sudden Star, it shot through liquid air,
> And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
> Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,
> The heavens bespangling with dishevelled light.
> The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
> And pleased pursue its progress through the skies. (109)

Like Berenice's lock, whose stellar ascension was observed only by the mathematician Conon, the translation of Belinda's lock is seen only by the muse. And Pope invokes another instance of this trope of the sole observer

of a celestial transformation when he mentions the heavenly withdrawal of "Rome's great founder . . . / To Proculus alone confessed in view." The reference is to Book 1, xvi, of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* and its account of Romulus's departure for the heavens. Romulus had been reviewing his army in the Campus Martius when "suddenly a storm came up, . . . and enveloped him in a cloud," and he vanished (Livy 1:57). Seeing that the royal seat was empty after the storm had passed, the Roman soldiers believed "the assertion of the senators, who had been standing next to Romulus, that he had been caught up on high in the blast," and they "hailed Romulus as a god and a god's son, the King and Father of the Roman city" (1:57–59). But, Livy adds, there was a rumor that "the king had been rent in pieces by the hands of the senators" (1:59). However, "the shrewd device of one man . . . gained new credit for the story" of Romulus's heavenly ascension: Proculus Julius, "weighty in council, . . . addressed the assembly," telling them that Romulus had "descended suddenly from the sky at dawn" that morning and commanded him to declare to the Roman people that Rome would be the capital of the world if its citizens cherished the art of war (1:59). Romulus then "departed on high," and, says Livy, this assurance of Romulus's immortality calmed the plebeians and the army.

Pope's reference to the heavenly withdrawal of "Rome's great founder" as an analogue of the stellar translation of Berenice's lock is an allusion that resonates in several directions at once. First of all, it echoes earlier allusions within Pope's poem to the *Aeneid,* for if Romulus is the founder of the town that (when amalgamated with Aeneas's settlement Lavinium and his son Ascanius's settlement Alba Longa) gave its name to what would become the city of Rome, Aeneas is the founder of the Latin people, as Livy makes clear. As demanded by the mock-epic form, Pope parodically evokes episodes from the great Greek and Latin epics. In Canto 4, for example, after the Baron has clipped Belinda's lock and Belinda's guardian sylphs have abandoned her, the "dusky and melancholy sprite" Umbriel descends into the Cave of Spleen (in a parody of Aeneas's descent) to ask the goddess to "touch Belinda with chagrin" (Pope 101–2). And just as during his descent Aeneas bore the golden bough as an offering to the goddess Proserpina, so the gnome Umbriel during *his* descent bears "a branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand" (Pope 102) as an offering to the goddess Spleen and a token of safe passage.

Again Pope explicitly invokes the *Aeneid* at the beginning of Canto 5 when Belinda pleads with the Baron to return the lock "though Fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's ears": "In vain Thalestris with reproach assails, / For who can move when fair Belinda fails? / Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain, / While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain" (Pope 105). In the *Aeneid,* Book 4, when Aeneas tells Dido that he must depart, she upbraids him as a liar and traitor, then faints. When Dido revives, she asks her sister Anna to go to Aeneas and plead with him to delay long enough for Dido to recover from her grief. But Aeneas, under divine constraint, remains unmoved.

In evoking Livy's account of Romulus's heavenly withdrawal, Pope not

only recalls his poem's earlier allusions to that other great figure connected with Rome's beginnings (Aeneas) but also imports associations present in the interpretive tradition of Livy's account, associations linking Romulus's ascension to the heavenly translations that conclude the great poetic work of Livy's contemporary Ovid, those of Aeneas in Book 14 and of Julius Caesar in Book 15 of the *Metamorphoses.* In Book 14 Aeneas's courage and his mother Venus's intercession with the gods win him the gift of immortality. Venus has the god of the river Numicius cleanse her son of any mortal trace, and then she touches Aeneas's lips with a mixture of ambrosia and nectar, transforming him into "a god, whom the Roman populace styled Indiges and honoured with temple and with sacrifice" (*Ovid* 4:343). Similarly, at the end of Book 15 Jove tells Venus—who had wanted to thwart the conspiracy against Julius Caesar's life ("that life . . . which alone remains to me from Dardanian Iülus [Aeneas's son]," as Venus says [4:419])—that no power of the gods can overrule the Fates and that she must content herself with rendering Caesar immortal: "Meanwhile do thou . . . make him a star" (4:425). And Venus, taking her place unseen in the senate-house, "caught up the passing soul of her Caesar from his body, and not suffering it to vanish into air, she bore it towards the stars of heaven. And as she bore it she felt it glow and burn, and released it from her bosom. Higher than the moon it mounted up and, leaving behind it a fiery train, gleamed as a star" (4:425).

The heavenly translations of Romulus and Julius Caesar offer interesting points of comparison to the stellar transformation of Maquokeeta. Where Romulus is carried up to heaven in a thunderstorm, the Indian chief Maquokeeta, identifying himself with the sky god, descends in a thunderstorm to wed the princess Pocahontas. The violent conclusion of this mating matches the violence of Livy's subtext: the rumor of Romulus's assassination and dismemberment by the senators. Similarly, Maquokeeta's survival as an eye in the sky to watch over the virgin continent rhymes with the translation of Julius Caesar's soul into a star so that, as Jove says, "ever it may be the divine Julius who looks forth upon our Capitol and Forum from his lofty temple" (*Ovid* 4:425).

Maquokeeta and Caesar both look down on their previous realms—the former as a kind of passive onlooker, a token of the Indians' previous possession of the land and a promise of an ultimate return to that oneness with nature which they represent, and the latter as a kind of protective deity who watches over the city's sacred places and its progress to empire. Indeed, one wonders, given that Caesar's translation is carried out by the goddess Venus, whether Ovid meant to suggest that Caesar's soul, like Maquokeeta's, was lodged in the Morning Star (the planet Venus), the second brightest light in the night sky after the moon.

The image of Dido's golden lock, clipped by Iris and offered to Proserpina in order to release Dido's soul, reflects the Roman practice of plucking a few hairs from the forehead of a victim before sacrificing it, "and as the dying were regarded as offerings to the nether gods, a similar custom was observed in their case" (Virgil 1:443, n. 2). This image from the *Aeneid,* Book 4, would have resonated for Crane in that imagery of golden

hair that occurs at intervals throughout *The Bridge*: the image of Helen of Troy's golden hair, for example, which Crane carried over from "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and from Goethe's *Faust,* an image of beauty's immortality figured by gold's incorruptibility, whose climactic evocation in *The Bridge* is the quester's intuition of the "golden hair" the washerwoman carries back home to children in "The Tunnel," and that other image of Demeter's golden hair as the grain that lies behind Crane's figuration of Pocahontas as the Corn Mother whose hair is the sprouting maize.

To the extent that the incidents of the *Aeneid,* Book 4, serve as a classical background to "The Dance"'s sacred marriage, Crane's decision to make this marriage metamorphose into Maquokeeta's death and stellar translation links this translation to the image of Dido's funereal/sacrificial lock, thus evoking a complex of images having to do with astral phenomena, hair, death, and immortality. In the ancient world the tail of a comet was imagined as being the flowing hair trailing behind a fast-moving astral body, hence, the name "comet" from the Greek κομήτης, long-haired. Likewise the fiery track of a meteor passing through the earth's atmosphere, a falling or shooting star, was thought of in this way, as reflected in Pope's description of Belinda's lock rising into the heavens: "A sudden star, it shot through liquid air, / And drew behind a radiant trail of hair." Of course, the association of a falling or shooting star with death and the departure of a soul from its body is an ancient and widespread folk belief, as is the association of a comet's appearance with the death of kings and the fall of states. Ovid invokes this tradition when he images the passage of Caesar's soul into the heavens as being meteoric: borne aloft in Venus's bosom his soul begins to "glow and burn." In "The Dance," the poetic quester sees Maquokeeta's translated spirit as being like a "white meteor" (Crane 47). And the association of a shooting star's track as a trail of flowing hair with the idea of the soul's leaving the body probably originated in that ancient practice of treating the dying as sacrificial offerings to the underworld gods by plucking a lock of their hair.

What the ancients believed they were looking at in the darkness of the night sky was the underworld, that dark half of the sphere surrounding the earth that was rotated upward when the bright half descended. And if taking a lock of hair as an offering to Proserpina was a rite deemed necessary to insure the proper disposition of the deceased's shade within the goddess's realm, then it would be a natural enough association when the ancients saw a shooting star (a fiery soul entering the netherworld of the night sky) to image the star's track as a flowing lock of hair. Since the kind of immortality associated with the worship of Ceres and Proserpina was the endlessly recurring return from beneath the earth of the daughter as the golden-haired grain, it was only appropriate that by as much as the ancients hoped for a share of that immortality they would offer a lock of the deceased's hair to the goddess as a symbolic token of such return—like begetting like. Indeed, in the *Aeneid,* Book 6, it is precisely this sense of the underworld that Anchises gives Aeneas, explaining that the souls of the dead spend a certain time there being punished for their old offenses. But when "time's cycle is

complete," and these souls "have rolled time's wheel through a thousand years, the god summons them to drink of the River Lethe" so that "reft of memory, they may revisit the vault above and conceive desire to return again to the body" (Virgil 1:559).

That Crane understood the significance of this network of images can be judged from the passage in "The Dance" where Maquokeeta's soul is translated into the star that "holds the twilight's dim perpetual throne." Having identified himself with Maquokeeta during the latter's immolation at the stake, the poetic quester witnesses the chieftain's transformation:

> I saw thy change begun!
>
> And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny
> Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent
> . . . There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent . . .
>
> Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze— . . .
> And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize! (47–48)

The white meteor of Maquokeeta's stellar translation is balanced by the immortal maize of the virgin continent's annual renewal, and this collocation of the images of star, hair, vegetation, and immortality recalls the earlier passage in "The Dance" when the poetic quester, imaginatively journeying back to the pre-Columbian Indian world, comes upon a scene of interrupted lovemaking between Maquokeeta and Pocahontas and, as he pursues the Indian maiden, says,

> I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
> Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
> Your hair's keen crescent running . . .
>
> And one star, swinging, take its place, alone,
> Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass—
> Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn. (46)

§ 15
The Historical Pocahontas and the Mythical Quetzalcoatl; Prescott, Spence, and D. H. Lawrence as Influences on *The Bridge*; Waldo Frank's *Our America* and the Image of Submergence

The brilliance of Crane's syncretist method in "The Dance" depends not just on his evoking structures and settings from the *Aeneid* as an allusive background but on how deftly he is able to merge this classical material with what he knew of Amerindian myth and lore. Clearly, the Indian proper names and the landscape descriptions in "The Dance" suggest a setting on the Eastern seaboard of North America. The historical Pocahontas, the daughter of the Algonquian chief Powhatan, was from Virginia. She had saved the life of Captain John Smith of James Town in 1608 by interceding with her father when Smith, who had been captured by the Indians,

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was about to be executed. After rescuing Smith, she visited James Town frequently, and her friendship was considered a key factor in the colony's survival. In 1613 she was brought to James Town as a state prisoner and used as a means of making peace with the Indians. Believing that Smith was dead (Smith had returned to England in 1609), Pocahontas married the Englishman John Rolfe in 1614. She subsequently became a Christian and traveled to England with her husband in 1616. John Smith petitioned Queen Anne on Pocahontas's behalf, and the Indian princess was received at court and feted by the public. After a stay of seven months, she and her husband reembarked for America, but she died off Gravesend in February 1617 and was buried in the cemetery there.

In contrast, the name of Pocahontas's lover in "The Dance," the chieftain Maquokeeta, is as imaginary as the former's is historical. Crane told Waldo Frank in a letter that "the name, Maquokeeta," derived "from an amusing source": "a beautiful rum-drinking, firewater wassailing friend of mine,—a N.Y. taxi-driver (independent!) who hails from Missouri and is part Indian, has a middle name, Maquokeeta, which he alludes to as meaning 'big river.' Some tribal term or other" (Weber, *Hart* 337). Given that in "The River" Crane uses the Mississippi as a kind of temporal highway in reverse to convey the quester back to the atemporal, womblike realm of the Gulf and from there to the pre-Columbian Indian world of American origins in "The Dance," it seems only appropriate that the latter section's Indian chieftain should bear a name ("Big River") evocative of his role as the fertilizing moisture. It is also appropriate that the Indian princess whom Crane chooses to symbolize the physical nature of the land should bear the name of a historical figure who saved the life of one white man, married another, and was instrumental in securing the survival of the earliest English settlement in North America; and finally, it is appropriate that this figure should stand for the passing of the virgin land's possession from the Indians to the whites and that her actual death from illness in England, like Maquokeeta's poetic one at the stake, should evoke the ultimate fate of her people in English-speaking North America.

That "The Dance"'s action is set on the East Coast of North America seems obvious enough, then, both from the geographic locale of the historical Pocahontas and from the place names the quester mentions as he journeys back to the Indian world: "O Appalachian Spring! . . . that violet wedge / Of Adirondacks!" (46), "winds over Cumberland" (48). But there is one difficulty. If the quester's journey down the Mississippi in "The River" is meant to return him to the pre-Columbian "nature-world" of the Indians, then the Indian world he enters in "The Dance," a world associated with the figure of the historical Pocahontas, is not pre-Columbian by a good hundred years or so. To get back to *that* world (the Indian lands of Central America) and thus make the white quester's identification with the Indians in "The Dance" balance Columbus's earlier encounter with them in "Ave Maria," some further level of meaning in "The Dance" is required. And Crane provides this by layering beneath the figure of Maquokeeta an

earlier Indian figure associated with pre-Columbian Central America—the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl.

This deeper level can be glimpsed at three distinct moments in the text. First, and most obviously, for a poem whose setting and season are epitomized by the phrase "Appalachian Spring," "The Dance" begins with a strangely incongruous passage:

> The swift red flesh, a winter king—
> Who squired the glacier woman down the sky?
> She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;
> She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die.
>
> And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands
> With mineral wariness found out the stone
> Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands? (45)

Certainly, canyons, autumn drought, and mesa sands evoke an image not of mid-Atlantic virgin forests in spring but of southwestern deserts or the Mexican plateau. And since the name Maquokeeta is of Missouri origin, according to Crane, this points as well to a region lying west and south of the historical Pocahontas's domain, as would be only appropriate, given that the quester's journey down the temporal "big river" leads him to the Gulf of Mexico and its environs, the realm of Columbus's voyages and the expeditions of the conquistadors. The second moment suggesting the presence of the earlier Indian figure is the association of Maquokeeta with the eagle and the serpent during the rain dance and thunderstorm—Quetzalcoatl's name literally meaning the "bird serpent" or "feathered serpent." The third moment that makes this identification of the earlier figure virtually certain, is the translation of Maquokeeta's soul into the Morning Star, a key episode in the legend of Quetzalcoatl.

From Crane's correspondence, we can be fairly certain which authors (William Prescott, Lewis Spence, and D. H. Lawrence) he consulted for information about Quetzalcoatl and his associated imagery and also fairly certain of the period in *The Bridge*'s composition when Crane became interested in this material and in the conquest of the Aztecs. In a September 5, 1926, letter to Waldo Frank from the Isle of Pines, Cuba, Crane expresses his determination to learn Spanish "as a necessary preparation for my next piece of work just apprehended in the form of a blank verse tragedy of Aztec mythology—for which I shall have to study the obscure calendars of dead kings" (488). Just as the initial idea for *The Bridge* grew out of Crane's earlier long poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," so the idea for the project he planned to begin after *The Bridge* and for which he spent a year in Mexico on a Guggenheim Fellowship supposedly doing research, a project with an "Aztec theme . . . , a drama featuring Montezuma and Cortez" (Unterecker 652), clearly grew out of the background reading he had done in Amerindian lore for imagining the Pocahontas and Maquokeeta figures in *The Bridge*. In a March 5, 1926, letter to Gorham Munson, Crane said he had just read "Prescott's *Ferdinand & Isabella*" (434), and

since one of Crane's friends from his Guggenheim year, history professor Lesley Byrd Simpson, later noted that Crane's notions about the conquest of the Aztecs "were mostly taken from Prescott" (Unterecker 695), it seems likely Hart had also read Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843), probably in 1926 or earlier.

The first part of Prescott's book is an overview of the Aztec civilization prior to the Spanish discovery of Mexico, and at one point in this account he touches on an "interesting personage in their mythology" in terms that would have immediately caught Crane's attention:

> Quetzalcoatl, god of the air, a divinity who, during his residence on earth, instructed the natives in the use of metals, in agriculture, and in the arts of government. He was one of those benefactors of their species, doubtless, who have been deified by the gratitude of posterity. Under him, the earth teemed with fruits and flowers, without the pains of culture. An ear of Indian corn was as much as a single man could carry . . . In short, these were the halcyon days, which find a place in the mythic systems of so many nations of the Old World. It was the *golden age* of Anahuac. (38–39)

In associating Quetzalcoatl with the Mexican golden age and his departure with its passing, Prescott in effect equates the Aztec deity with an ancient mythological figure such as Astraea. And since Astraea-Virgo is one of the archetypal female figures layered beneath Crane's Pocahontas, it seems only appropriate that Quetzalcoatl should be correspondingly layered beneath the figure of Pocahontas's lover.

Prescott gives one version of Quetzalcoatl's departure:

> For some cause, not explained, Quetzalcoatl incurred the wrath of one of the principal gods and was compelled to abandon the country . . . When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf, he took leave of his followers, promising that he and his descendants would revisit them hereafter, and then, entering his wizard skiff, made of serpents' skins, embarked on the great ocean for the fabled land of Tlapallan. He was said to have been tall in stature, with a white skin, long, dark hair, and a flowing beard. The Mexicans looked confidently to the return of the benevolent deity; and this remarkable tradition, deeply cherished in their hearts, prepared the way . . . for the future success of the Spaniards. (39)

Upon learning of the Aztecs' belief that Quetzalcoatl would return one day from the east whence he had departed, Cortes had claimed to be the returned deity, using the Aztecs' own mythology to help subjugate them—a "return" of the deity that brought not a renewal of the golden age but the destruction of the Aztec world in the Spanish search for gold and the fabled city of El Dorado. (One recalls in this connection that Cortes makes a brief appearance in the "Van Winkle" section of *The Bridge* as part of the quester's childhood memories of studying American myth and history—"Times earlier, when you hurried off to school, . . . / You walked with Pizarro in a copybook, / And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in" [39]—and

that the name of the goldrush town to which the farm family in "Indiana" journeys is Eldorado.)

It may be that Crane's knowledge of the conquest of Mexico was "mostly taken from Prescott," as Lesley Simpson said, but it is clear from Crane's correspondence that his knowledge of Aztec lore derived from at least two other sources. In a May 1926 letter from the Isle of Pines, Crane reports that he had "been having a great time reading *Atlantis in America,* the last book out on the subject, and full of exciting suggestions" (462). *Atlantis in America,* published in 1925 in New York by Brentano's, was by Lewis Spence (1874–1955), a Scottish folklorist, poet, and scholar of the occult who was probably the most prolific and popular early twentieth-century writer in English on the lore of the Central and South American Indians. With *Atlantis in America,* and his earlier *Myths of Mexico and Peru* (1913) and *The Gods of Mexico* (1923), Spence gives us virtually every variant of the Quetzalcoatl legend. According to Spence, Quetzalcoatl was a deity of the pre-Aztec people, the Toltecs, and "was regarded by the Aztec race as a god of somewhat alien character" (*Myths* 78–79), the Aztecs' principal deity being Huitzilopochtli, the war god. When Quetzalcoatl was forced to leave Mexico by the plotting of the magician Tezcatlipoca (an episode that Spence theorizes is a symbolic account of the Aztec's displacement of the Toltecs), one version of his departure, as we saw in Prescott's account, had him embarking on a raft made of serpents and sailing east to the fabled land of Tlapallan.

> But other accounts state that the king cast himself upon a funeral pyre and was consumed, and that the ashes arising from the conflagration flew upward, and were changed into birds of brilliant plumage. His heart also soared into the sky, and became the morning star. The Mexicans averred that Quetzalcoatl died when the star became visible, and thus they bestowed upon him the title "Lord of the Dawn." They further said that when he died he was invisible for four days, and that for eight days he wandered in the underworld, after which time the morning star appeared, when he achieved resurrection, and ascended his throne as god. (Spence, *Myths* 80)

The Aztecs identified Quetzalcoatl with the planet Venus, and so he was "the God of Morning when it begins to dawn" and "also the Lord of the Twilight on the approach of night" (Spence, *Gods* 129); hence, Crane's image of the translated Maquokeeta: "He holds the twilight's dim perpetual throne" (45). Like "all dawn heroes," Quetzalcoatl "was represented as of white complexion, clothed in long white robes" (Spence, *Myths* 81). And, of course, the dawn as a symbol of heroic illumination or startling self-revelation is a recurring figure in Crane's poetry.

Besides being a god of the bright sky, Quetzalcoatl was also a wind god or god of the air. In particular, says Spence, he "represents the gentle trade-wind": "From April or May to the beginning of October the trade-wind blows from the east coast over the Plateau of Anahuac, bringing with it abundance of rain, and accelerating vegetable growth, thus actu-

ally 'sweeping the ways for the rain-gods'" (*Gods* 138). Indeed, because of his association with the rain-bearing trade wind, Quetzalcoatl also was "a 'serpent-and-rain god'" and, says Spence, a solar god as well: "In tropical latitudes the sun draws the clouds around him at noon. The rain falls from the clouds accompanied by thunder and lightning—the symbols of the divine serpent" (*Myths* 83).

Spence theorizes that the symbolic figure of the "feathered serpent" combined the images of the airborne (and thus birdlike) "feathery" clouds bearing rain and of the zigzag, serpent-like strokes of lightning. And he notes that "the snake, besides being symbolised by lightning in many American mythologies, is also symbolical of water, which is well typified in its sinuous movements" (*Myths* 76), and that it was also "the symbol of life, for the serpent has a phallic significance because of its similarity to the symbol of generation and fructification" (74). Of course, all of this imagery—from the "distant cloud" and "thunder bud" to the "cyclone" threshing in "eagle feathers" down Maquokeeta's back and the serpent lightning whose "red fangs / And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air"—is used by Crane in evoking the chieftain-as-sky-god's fertilization of Pocahontas-as-earth-goddess in "The Dance." It is worth noting as well in this regard that since Quetzalcoatl was "a deity of the pre-Nahua people of Mexico" (the Toltecs) and "of somewhat alien character" to the Aztec race, some of his attributes and imagery were taken over by Aztec gods, most notably by the principal Aztec deity, the war god Huitzilopochtli, who was also "the serpent-god of lightning" associated "with summer, the season of lightning, and [who] therefore had dominion to some extent over the crops and the fruits of the earth" (*Myths* 74) (crops that had to be symbolically fertilized with the blood of hostages captured in war) and also by the Aztec "god of rain and moisture," Tlaloc (75).

Crane found that several other aspects of Quetzalcoatl's legend, as explicated by Spence, provided an additional Amerindian allusive background for "The Dance"'s dramatic action. Spence points out that, in one version of his myth, "Quetzalcoatl discovered maize which was concealed in the mountain Tonacatepetl" (*Gods* 132). It is, of course, Quetzalcoatl's association with the maize, as well as with the trade winds that bear the life-giving rain clouds, that accounts in large part for this deity's representing an earlier golden age of agricultural plenty. Significantly for the action of "The Dance," Spence records in *Myths of Mexico and Peru* an important festival of the Aztecs that lasted from June 28 to July 14, "when the maize plant had attained its full growth. The women . . . wore their hair unbound, and shook and tossed it so that by sympathetic magic the maize might take the hint and grow correspondingly long" (*Myths* 87), a link between women's hair and the growing grain familiar from the myth of Demeter and Korē. The central figure in this festival was "a female captive or slave, with face painted red and yellow to represent the colours of the maize-plant" (87). She had been trained as a dancer, and "throughout the duration of the festival she danced" until "on its expiring night she was accompanied in the dance by the women of the community." At daybreak the exhausted dancer

was sacrificed, and her "still palpitating heart" was offered to the maize goddess: "In this manner the venerable goddess, weary with the labours of inducing growth in the maize-plant, was supposed to be revivified" (87). This scenario of encouraging the growing maize by a dance in which the dancer is sacrificed to the goddess at the conclusion cannot help but recall Maquokeeta's snake dance to bring the fertilizing rainstorm that causes the maize to grow, a dance at whose conclusion Maquokeeta is also sacrificed.

In *Atlantis in America,* a volume that cites virtually all of the Quetzalcoatl legends mentioned so far, Spence speculates about just such a fertilization sacrifice in Quetzalcoatl's case. Referring to Sir James Frazer's "discoveries" regarding "the magical significance of early kingship," discoveries about "those magical virtues of vitality and virility" residing in the king's person "which were thought to cause the crops to flourish, and the lack of which in a monarch meant agricultural failure," Spence notes that such beliefs "dated from a period when the king and the rain-making priest were one and the same individual" (*Atlantis* 61). The practice of immolating "aged and impotent monarchs" served the twofold purpose of placating the gods and ushering in "a more vigorous successor." "Failing sacrifice," the priest-king "must be rejuvenated by a magical elixir" (61–62). He continues,

> in one of the myths . . . he is spoken of as being immolated on a funeral pyre. In his time the maize crop was so large and fruitful that only a strong man might carry a head of the cereal of which Quetzalcoatl was the original discoverer. His powers diminish through age, and he conceives the idea of obtaining magical assistance from the fatherland, where, he is assured, "another old man" awaits him, perhaps the high priest of his cult. The expression "another" makes it clear that Quetzalcoatl was at that time regarded as old, but he is assured that he will return "as a youth . . . " if he will seek aid in the homeland, the one locality where he can obtain the elixir of youth. In the nature allegory which has been woven out of Quetzalcoatl's history he is thought of as the trade wind which, after bearing the fertilizing rains to Mexico, returns to its home in the east to seek new showers to continue its mission in the ensuing spring. But, if I am not in error, the myth contains also a human and historical element, the story of a priest-king forced to return to his ancestral home, partially ruined as that may have been, to seek the aid of its official magics. There are records, we have seen, of occasional voyages eastward in the myths of Quetzalcoatl to Tollan-Tlapallan. On one of these . . . he did not return to American soil. (*Atlantis* 62)

Spence in effect theorizes that the two major variants in the ending of Quetzalcoatl's story (his death by fire and his departure toward the east on a serpent raft) represent the two main alternatives in the life of a priest-king whose physical health is homeopathically linked to his land's well-being—his immolation and replacement as part of a fertility ritual, or a magical renewal of his potency. The former would seem at first glance to have more resonance for the action of "The Dance," particularly since Maquokeeta's immolation figures the replacement (as inseminators/cultivators of the American earth goddess) of the older, indigenous Indian population by

the newly arrived (presumably more vigorous) whites. But the latter alternative—the variant of Quetzalcoatl's legend most in accord with Spence's argument in *Atlantis in America*—turns out to have equally significant implications not only for "The Dance" but for *The Bridge* as a whole.

In *Atlantis in America,* Spence argues that "a great continent formerly occupied the . . . major portion of the North Atlantic region, and a considerable portion of its southern basin," that this continent began to disintegrate "in Miocene (Late Tertiary) times" because of "volcanic and other causes," and that the disintegration resulted in the formation of two large "insular masses," one "at a relatively short distance from the entrance to the Mediterranean" and the other "in the region of the present West India Islands": "They may respectively be called Atlantis and Antillia. Communication was possible between them by an insular chain" (17). Spence further speculates that "these two island continents and the connecting chain of islands persisted until late Pleistocene times, at which epoch (about 25,000 years ago, or the beginning of the Post-Glacial epoch) Atlantis seems to have experienced further disintegration. Final disaster appears to have overtaken Atlantis about 10,000 BC. Antillia, on the other hand, seems to have survived until a much more recent period, and still persists fragmentally in the Antillean group, or West India Islands. It would seem then that if Atlantean culture reached America it must have done so by way of the Antillian continent" (17).

Spence argues that beginning "about 25,000 years ago at the close of the Great Ice Age" the inhabitants of the eastern island continent, Atlantis, began migrating into southwestern Europe, that this "highly developed race" was the one we now call Cro-Magnon or Aurignacian, and that there was a second wave (about 14,000 BC) and then a third (about 10,000 BC) of these people, as Atlantis went through successive disintegrations and sank beneath the sea (*Atlantis* 40). In a similar manner, American soil was invaded about 200 BC, says Spence, by a race possessing an Aurignacian culture and apparently migrating from Antillia, the more western of the two island continents: "The carriers of the culture in question were the Maya, the origin of whom is, according to archaeologists, shrouded in a mystery quite as dense as that which surrounds the provenance of the Aurignacians" (41).

The preceding arguments, with their highly conjectural supporting "evidence," make up the first two chapters of Spence's book and set the stage for the third chapter, whose title would have attracted Crane's attention—"Quetzalcoatl the Atlantean." Spence contends that "the Toltecs were an actual historical people who arrived in Mexico at some time in the seventh century A.D.," that "the tradition of the destruction of their city of Tollan is probably a reminiscence of, or in some manner became confused with, that of the destruction of Atlantis," and that "Quetzalcoatl, their first king, was an historical personage, and the leader of a migration from Antillia": "He was also regarded as a leader of the Maya migration, which reached Central America eight centuries before the settlement of the Toltecs in

Mexico. This implies that the myth was brought to Mexico by Maya-Toltecs, who naturalised it there" (*Atlantis* 64).

Regarding Quetzalcoatl as a "culture-hero" of the Toltecs, "who undoubtedly links them with Atlantis-Antillia, . . . who first led them into the country, and who finally returned to the homeland whence he had come," the fabled Tlapallan of his legend (*Atlantis* 51), Spence naturally emphasizes a motif in the Frazerian notion of sacral kingship (the rejuvenation of an aged, ailing king by a magical elixir) that is associated in Quetzalcoatl's legend with his departure to the east. Citing Sahagun's *Historia Universal de Nueva España,* Spence recounts how the Aztec sorcerers Tezcatlipoca and Uitzilopochtli were jealous of Quetzalcoatl and "minded to destroy him": "Tezcatlipoca came to his palace disguised as a physician, and, hearing that he was sick, proffered him a magical draught which, he assured Quetzalcoatl, would make him forget his sorrows and his strong desire to leave Mexico. Quetzalcoatl, seeing that his secret had been probed, asked the mysterious visitant where he must betake himself. 'To Tollan-Tlapallan' was the reply, 'where another old man awaits thee. He and you shall speak together, and on thy return thou shalt be as a youth, yes, even as a boy'" (*Atlantis* 52). After drinking the magical draught, Quetzalcoatl was possessed by "so great a longing to depart" that "he arose and went from Tollan. Arrived at the coast, he commanded that a raft of serpents should be constructed for him, and in this he seated himself as in a canoe, put out to sea, and set out on his voyage to Tollan-Tlapallan" (*Atlantis* 52–53). Spence goes on to cite Torquemada to the effect "that when Quetzalcoatl departed, he assured his disciples that at a future time there would come by way of the sea, where the sun rises, certain white men with black beards, like him, and that these would be his brothers and would rule the land" (*Atlantis* 53).

Spence interlards his presentation of the Quetzalcoatl legends and his geographic and anthropological speculations about Atlantis with analogical summaries of the Atlantis story from Plato's *Critias,* a work with which Crane was certainly familiar. Of course, the issue here is not the scientific validity of Spence's thesis but the imaginative appeal of his theory for Crane in working on *The Bridge.* Indeed, Crane had expressed his sense of the ultimate undecidability of Spence's theory in that May 1926 letter from the Isle of Pines in which he reported having just read *Atlantis in America,* "the last book out on the subject, and full of exciting suggestions": "Putting it back for 40 or 50 thousand years, it's easy to believe that a continent existed in mid-Atlantic waters and that the Antilles and West Indies are but salient peaks of its surface. Impossible forever to prove, however" (462). Clearly, Crane was interested in Spence's book because its central thesis fitted perfectly with one of the main images in *The Bridge.*

Crane had been familiar with this imagery of the "submergence" of Amerindian culture by a relentless tide of white settlers since at least 1919 when he read Waldo Frank's *Our America.* Frank eventually became one of Crane's closest friends and the editor of Crane's posthumous *Collected*

Poems (1933). In chapter four of Frank's lyrical analysis of the historical components of American life, entitled "The Land of Buried Cultures," he focuses on the lost world of the Indians: "Everywhere, the cultures which we call Indian—symbolizing and perpetuating in the false name our ignorance—were of a spiritual nature: tended in a degree we can measure toward spiritual greatness. And everywhere, these cultures were buried by the Caucasian floods" (Frank 107). The Indian, says Frank, believes "that he must live in harmony with Nature, and its Great Spirit . . . For he has learned that from this harmony comes health," (113), and in seeking "happiness in harmony with his surroundings," he seeks "life by cultivation, rather than exploitation" (95). In a passage that clearly took root in Crane's imagination, Frank says,

> The Indian is savage only by the materialistic measure of the Caucasians. His one inferiority lay in his lack of metal weapons[,] . . . everywhere, he had one fatal weakness: he knew not iron . . . Whether he dwelt in populous cities or in *tepees,* he lived in a spiritual world so true and so profound, that the heel of the pioneer has even now not wholly stamped it out . . . Many of the Indians have succumbed. The fluent ways of the plains people were least equipped to resist the Caucasian floods . . . But although the entire question of saving a world so wistful, so alien as the Indian, in our materialistic age, seems vain, yet it is not too late to glimpse what that world was. (109–10)

Frank's image of the Caucasian floods submerging the Indians simply because they "knew not iron" no doubt informed Crane's description of the Indians' lost world in "The River": "Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain, / The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools," their "timber torn / By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage! / They doze now, below axe and powder horn" (43). This sunken world of the Indians had "reached its apogee," says Frank, in "the central lands of Yucatan and Guatemala" where "the Mayas builded great cities, and made beauty out of rock and upon walls" and in Mexico where "the Aztecs . . . builded a great nation . . . upon the zenith" of which "Cortes swooped down with his Spanish muskets and blotted them out" (Frank 107–8). But the dim outlines of that vanished world can still be seen, Frank claims, in the Pueblo Indians of the American Southwest.

It would have been a short associative step from this imagery of the "spiritual greatness" of the Indian world submerged by the materialism of the "Caucasian floods" to Plato's story of an island-continent whose inhabitants (descendants of the god Poseidon and a mortal woman) were the most favored in the world until they eventually took "the infection of wicked coveting and pride of power" (Plato 1224) and were punished by having their island sunk beneath the sea by "violent earthquakes and floods" in "a single day and night of misfortune" (Plato 1159). And of course Spence's theory would have supported (if not suggested) this poetic association precisely because it hypothesized an actual historical link between Atlantis and the central American Indians in the person of Quetzalcoatl.

The two alternative versions of Quetzalcoatl's end that Spence recounts

would, then, have both fit in with Crane's plan for *The Bridge.* On the one hand, the association of Quetzalcoatl with a spiritual and agricultural golden age that ends with his fiery death and translation into the Morning Star meshes perfectly with the image of a classical Golden Age whose vanishing is personified in the departure of Astraea for the heavens and her identification with the constellation Virgo. On the other hand, Spence's reading of Quetzalcoatl's departure to the east as the ritual renewal of a Frazerian sacral king who has grown old and must return to his origin (Atlantis) in order to have his youth and potency restored fits equally well with the role Crane imagines for the poetic quester. For the poetic quester who comes from a world grown old in the ways of materialism seeks a renewal of spiritual potency by an imaginative return to that original, Amerindian world that the white man's civilization had submerged, an Indian world that Spence speculated might actually represent the survival, in this hemisphere, of a submerged Atlantean culture. Hence, the reciprocity of Crane's visions of origins and ends in "The Dance" and "Atlantis," respectively.

In depicting the twentieth-century quester's imaginative recovery of the Indians' submerged world through his identification with the Quetzalcoatl-like figure of Maquokeeta, Crane was significantly influenced by one other book he read in the spring of 1926—D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent.* In a March 1926 letter to Gorham Munson, he says that though he had at first thought "Lawrence's *Plumed Serpent* was a masterpiece of racial description . . . , vividly beautiful, its landscapes, theatrical vistas, etc.," he later decided, after reading Waldo Frank's *Virgin Spain,* that Lawrence's rituals were "mere invention": "Only my interest in Maya and Toltec archaeology led me to order Lawrence's book" (434). For all Crane's demurrals about *The Plumed Serpent,* Lawrence's story of a twentieth-century Mexican who decides that the only solution to his country's political chaos, economic corruption, and spiritual aridity is to restore the ancient religion of Quetzalcoatl clearly made more of an impression on the writing of *The Bridge* than did Frank's *Virgin Spain.*

Lawrence's novel, told from the point of view of an Irishwoman, Kate Leslie, who is visiting Mexico, centers on Don Ramon Carrasco, the leader of the Quetzalcoatl movement. Kate falls under Ramon's spell and subsequently falls in love with his friend and supporter, General Cipriano Viedma. Using imagery drawn from Quetzalcoatl's myth, Ramon's movement depicts the coming restoration of the ancient religion as the cyclic return of the old god to his people. In the beginning Quetzalcoatl had been "the man on the hill, who was a god" and who taught the Mexicans "to sow maize . . . and build boats" (Lawrence 132). But after all the good things Quetzalcoatl had done for the Mexicans, eventually men forgot him. They turned to worshipping "the fire of the sun" by giving him the "blood of victims," so that "Quetzalcoatl mourned and grew old" and said, "Let me go home" (132–33). So "the dark sun reached an arm, and lifted Quetzalcoatl into the sky . . . and brought white men out of the east . . . So the weeping Mother brought her Son who was dead on the Cross to Mexico, to live in the temples" (133). But now with the passage of centuries, Jesus and his Mother

have grown old in their turn, and the great sun must "dip them in the bath of forgetting and peace and renewal": "But the Father will not leave us alone . . . The Father has looked around and has seen the Morning Star." And he has asked, "Who art thou, bright watchman?" And the star answered, "It is I, the Morning Star, who in Mexico was Quetzalcoatl" (134).

Clearly, Lawrence had done a good deal of reading about Quetzalcoatl and the religion of ancient Mexico, and Spence's works likely would have been included in his research. Nowhere is his acquaintance with the various versions of Quetzalcoatl's story more evident, or the original use Lawrence makes of this material more striking, than in a passage describing the god's transformation into the Morning Star: Quetzalcoatl, "being old, and weary with much living, . . . climbed the steep of the mountain, and over the snow of the volcano": "Then fire rose from the volcano around the old Quetzalcoatl, in wings and glittering feathers. And with the wings of fire and the glitter of sparks Quetzalcoatl flew up, up, like a wafting fire, like a glittering bird, up into space, . . . where is the door to the dark. So he entered in and was gone. Night fell, and Quetzalcoatl was gone, and men in the world saw only a star travelling back into heaven, departing under the low branches of darkness" (Lawrence 239).

In that outer darkness, Quetzalcoatl, conveyed by unseen hands and anointed with oil, is laid "in the fountain that bubbles darkly at the heart of the worlds," laid "in warm oblivion" to sleep "the great sleep" (Lawrence 242), imagery that reminds one of Whitman's conjunction of sleep, death, night, the mother, and the sea in "The Sleepers." (Lawrence's imagery here recalls as well Crane's description in "The River" of the departed Indian deities as the "old gods of the rain" who "lie wrapped in pools / Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain" [43], a return to origin [Latin, *oriri*, to rise], i.e., to an amniotic sleep in the waters of rebirth that is figured in both cases by a fountain, a source from which a river rises. The image also evokes those fountains that stood at the center of the sunken island continent of Atlantis in Plato's *Critias*.) Quetzalcoatl, awakened from his long sleep by a voice calling his name, finds that he is a "new man," and he looks down to see "a faint star . . . hesitating wearily, waiting to pass"—the old Jesus. Quetzalcoatl tells Jesus: "I . . . will go down. Sleep thou the sleep without dreams. Farewell at the cross-roads, Brother Jesus . . . I am the lord of two ways . . . Thou wert the lord of the one way . . . I am on the threshold. I am stepping across the border. I am Quetzalcoatl, lord of both ways, star between day and dark" (Lawrence 243–44).

Lawrence's version of Quetzalcoatl's departure combines the fiery immolation and stellar translation of one ending of the myth with the return to origin and restoration of youth of the other, in effect, merging the sacrificial death of Frazer's aging sacral king and his replacement by a younger successor with the old king's magical rejuvenation. Lawrence emphasizes Quetzalcoatl's identification with the Morning Star when he has Don Ramon make it his symbol of the deity's being "the lord of two ways," a god who is both old and young, who stands like the star "between day and the dark." The Morning Star functions for Lawrence as a figure of the mar-

riage of opposites, a symbol of the way in which the bipolar oppositions that structure this world are transcended in the person of a deity. And what the Morning Star represents for Don Ramon in his effort to translate the ancient religion of the Mexicans back into the modern world, the Bridge (as a linking of opposites) represents for Crane's poetic quester in *his* attempt to imaginatively recover a sense of the Amerindians' spiritual and environmental union with their land and to make it an efficacious vision for America's future. And this analogous relationship between Morning Star and Brooklyn Bridge in the two works becomes, as we shall see, even clearer at the end of Crane's epic when the Bridge goes through its own stellar translation.

In his reference to Quetzalcoatl as being "on the threshold" and "stepping across the border," Lawrence means to associate the Amerindian "lord of two ways" with the classical Janus (a kind of Etruscan Dionysus) who became the Roman god of comings and goings, beginnings and endings, the god of thresholds and of the month of January, who was represented in consequence as having two faces pointing in opposite directions; for Don Ramon sees the return of Quetzalcoatl to the Mexican people as part of a larger, international movement to bring back all the ancient gods. He says, "If I want Mexicans to learn the name of Quetzalcoatl, it is because I want them to speak with the tongues of their own blood. I wish the Teutonic world would once more think in terms of Thor and Wotan . . . And I wish the Druidic world would see, honestly, that in the mistletoe is their mystery, and that they themselves are the Tuatha De Danaan, alive, but submerged. And a new Hermes should come back to the Mediterranean, and a new Ashtaroth to Tunis; and Mithras again to Persia, and Brahma unbroken to India, and the oldest dragons to China" (Lawrence 265–66).

We can recognize Don Ramon's Quetzalcoatl cult as part of a larger movement of the twentieth-century's first three decades that reacted against the spiritual and cultural bankruptcy of nineteenth-century urban materialism in the Christianized West by turning back to pre-Christian, national or ethnic deities or folkloric traditions. This movement included the efforts of Yeats and other Irish writers in the Celtic revival to reanimate the Tuatha De Danaan as a living cultural force in Irish nationalism, along with the restoration of Gaelic language and literature; the work of visual artists such as Picasso to introduce primitive elements from African art or from the cave paintings at Lascaux into Western painting; and even such sociopolitical efforts as those of Italian and German fascism to restore respectively to the modern world the grandeur of imperial Rome and the ferocity of Teutonic paganism. Little did Don Ramon realize what he was asking for (or how soon his wish would be granted) when he desired that "the Teutonic world would once more think in terms of Thor and Wotan."

§ 16
Nietzsche and the Return of the Old Gods; Zarathustra and Quetzalcoatl; the Eagle and the Serpent; the Dance

The great nineteenth-century philosophic precursor of this movement to regain a vivifying access to pre-Christian cultures in the West was Nietzsche, who in such early works as the unfinished *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *The Birth of Tragedy* tried to reimagine the tragic sense of life of pre-Socratic Greece. That sense was embodied for him in the dual figures of Dionysus and Apollo, as these underlay, in Nietzsche's formulation, the flowering of Greek drama. Writing at a point when he felt that Christianity was dead as a cultural or philosophical force in the West, Nietzsche tried to recover that moment in the tradition of Western thought prior to its wrong turning with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, prior to that transvaluation of the pre-Socratic world's values that Plato achieved by making truth-correspondence the highest good and by theorizing an other world of ideal forms, of pure ideas, in relation to which this world must always be an inadequate embodiment, must always be convicted of guilt. And by as much as Plato's other world of ideal forms provided the philosophical, and part of the imaginative, framework for Christianity's otherworldly afterlife of disembodied spirits and for its judgment of this world by the standard of truth-correspondence, Christianity's demise demonstrated for Nietzsche the unreality that lay at the core of Platonism. To this unreality of personal survival in an afterlife, Nietzsche opposed what he saw as the central wisdom of Greek tragedy, that joyful acceptance of death, of personal annihilation, within the larger context of the persistence of life as a whole—a wisdom embodied in the reciprocal figures of Apollo, as the shining principle of individuation personified in the tragic hero, and Dionysus, as the dark, instinctual principle of the natural world that both overcomes and continually generates new individuals, a principle whose wisdom is most often associated with the voice of the chorus.

As opposed to what Nietzsche saw as Plato's moral interpretation of change (i.e., his reading of coming-to-be and passing-away as phenomena that must be judged by their correspondence to an unchanging ideal world), Greek tragedy in Nietzsche's view understood change as having not a moral but only an aesthetic significance. It understood coming-to-be and passing-away as resulting from the game (*spiel*) that the Heraclitean ever-living fire plays with itself in forever equal innocence as it actualizes new forms, raises them to their heights, and then overwhelms them, ceaselessly creating and destroying—playing as artists and children do without any moral additive. In Greek tragedy, this play (in the sense of "game") of the ever-living fire with itself is raised to the level of aesthetic self-consciousness in a dramatic play (*spiel*) that reveals nature's deepest wisdom—that it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that human existence is justified.

Nietzsche's reimagining of the wellsprings of Greek tragedy was greatly influenced both by Schopenhauer's philosophy and by Wagnerian opera, as is apparent in *The Birth of Tragedy.* In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the*

Greeks Nietzsche's image of the Heraclitean ever-living fire is an elemental figuration of Schopenhauer's world Will, that principle that animates the world of representation as the motor of historical change. Schopenhauer's privileging of music as the only art that is an immediate copy of the Will itself rather than of the world of representation underlies Nietzsche's understanding of Wagner's operatic works and the way in which the appropriate music, matched to words, actions, and visual settings, reveals the deepest meaning of the phenomenal world as a drama of the Will. It is precisely this reading of Wagner's musical drama that Nietzsche uses as a paradigm for reimagining the central meaning of Greek tragedy, as indicated by the original title of his work, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music.* Throughout the book, the god Dionysus serves as a figure of the overwhelming of the Apollinian, individual self by the mystery of life's eternal recurrence, a figure of that self-overcoming or self-transcendence whereby an individual *willingly* seeks union with the suffering god through intoxication or, ultimately, through death, seeks union with that mysterious source from which life springs and to which it returns. By as much as Dionysus is, for Nietzsche, the archetypal pagan dying and reviving god whose worship was submerged by the religion of Jesus, Nietzsche understands his own efforts as in some sense preparing the way for the return of the old god in the wake of the failure of Christianity. In a late entry (March–June 1888) in his notebooks, Nietzsche contrasts the two deities:

> Dionysus versus the "Crucified": there you have the antithesis. It is *not* a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilation. In the other case, suffering—the "Crucified as the innocent one"—counts as an objection to this life, as a formula for its condemnation.—One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering: whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being is counted as *holy enough* to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering . . . The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction. (*Will* 542–43)

Nietzsche's efforts to restore a sense of the old god Dionysus to the modern world, in effect, to bring about the return of the pagan god who symbolizes life's own eternal return, reminds us of Don Ramon's efforts to restore the worship of Quetzalcoatl, a cyclic recurrence in which a renewed Quetzalcoatl replaces a weary Jesus who, as a god newly arrived in Mexico centuries before, had replaced the old Quetzalcoatl. And since Ramon imagines that with Quetzalcoatl's return Jesus departs to begin his own renewal, the cycle apparently continues. Indeed, Ramon's notion of what the Morning Star (the image of the Aztec god's death and transcendence, his stellar transfiguration) symbolizes in this new religion recalls Nietzsche's evocation of Dionysus as a figure of the isolated, individual self's transcendence of its limits through a kind of ecstatic, intoxicated union with the

core of being. Ramon believes that "we must give up the assembled self, the daily I, and putting off ourselves one after the other, meet unconscious in the Morning Star. Body, soul and spirit can be transfigured into the Morning Star. But without transfiguration we shall never get there" (Lawrence 270). Ramon tells Kate Leslie, "Quetzalcoatl is to me only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days. The universe is a nest of dragons, with a perfectly unfathomable life-mystery at the centre of it . . . I call the mystery the Morning Star" (Lawrence 292).

Crane was, of course, an enthusiastic reader of Nietzsche and had published in 1918 a short essay defending his philosophy during the wave of anti-German sentiment that followed America's entry into the war. Nietzsche was certainly the most important modern philosophic influence on Crane's poetry, and the figure of the suffering god Dionysus, as elaborated in *The Birth of Tragedy,* makes its presence felt in a group of related lyrics in *White Buildings* ("Lachrymae Christi," "Passage," "The Wine Menagerie," and "Recitative"). Crane would in consequence have recognized the Nietzschean resonances of *The Plumed Serpent,* particularly since Lawrence makes explicit references to Pan and Dionysus in characterizing the religion of Quetzalcoatl.

Undoubtedly, Crane also noticed a further Nietzschean echo in Lawrence's Quetzalcoatl. For if Nietzsche's joyful, suffering Dionysus is a symbol of individual self-transcendence achieved through the aligning of one's will with life's mysterious eternal recurrence, if he represents, as Nietzsche says in *Twilight of the Idols*, "the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types" (562), then Nietzsche's Zarathustra—who preaches that "man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss" and that "what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end" (*Zarathustra* 126–27)—represents the possibility not only of individual self-transcendence but also of a self-overcoming of the entire species. Invoking the old imagery of a chain or hierarchy of being, a hierarchy that runs upward from inanimate objects to plants to animals to man to God, Zarathustra denies God's existence as the ultimate rung in this hierarchy, saying that God is an unthinkable conjecture (*Zarathustra* 198), a fantasized pure "spirit" that lacks the shared common ground of a material or bodily presence exhibited by the hierarchy's other categories. But while Zarathustra denies the existence of God, thus emptying out the category that lies above man of its traditional occupant, he still wants to maintain the category itself (the category called "over man"), maintain it precisely because he cannot believe that with the passage of time man will remain the highest level of being, will not be subject to a further evolution virtually guaranteed by man's own will to self-overcoming. He says, "*I teach you the overman.* Man is something that shall be overcome . . . All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman" (*Zarathustra* 124). And he adds, "I will teach men the meaning of their existence—the overman,

the lightning out of the dark cloud of man" (*Zarathustra* 132). In effect, Zarathustra's preaching is an inquiry into, or a series of notes toward, the notion of this unspecified future being who would occupy the category "over man," a being that would have the same continuity of bodily existence that man has with the apes but who would be as different from man as man is from other primates.

Certainly, in reading Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent,* Crane would have noticed the resemblance between Ramon's preaching of the cyclically returning Quetzalcoatl, who is "only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days," and Zarathustra's of the overman, and this resemblance would have been underlined for Crane by a striking similarity in the animal imagery connected with both figures. For the plumed serpent Quetzalcoatl is associated in Lawrence's novel, as he is in Aztec lore, with the eagle and the snake, while Zarathustra has two constant companions—an eagle and a serpent: "An eagle soared through the sky in wide circles, and on him there hung a serpent, not like prey but like a friend: for she kept herself wound around his neck. 'These are my animals,' said Zarathustra . . . 'The proudest animal under the sun and the wisest animal under the sun—they have gone out on a search. They want to determine whether Zarathustra is still alive'" (*Zarathustra* 137). Zarathustra's eagle with the serpent round its neck is, as Nietzsche eventually makes clear, a symbol of the marriage of opposites. It is an alpha-omega symbol that evokes the conjoining of the beginning and the end. Zarathustra is, after all, preaching the eternal recurrence, which he images at one point as "the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence" (340) and evokes at another point as a kind of *uroboros* (a snake biting its own tale, the Egyptian symbol of the primal unity of opposites) when he says that the joy of life "wants *itself,* it bites into *itself,* the ring's will strives in it" (435). But this symbol also evokes the conjoining of the highest and the lowest, the eagle that soars in the heavens and the serpent that slides along the earth. Indeed, one might see this conjunction as a kind of classical marriage of sky and earth, like that underlying "The Dance."

As an animal symbol of the marriage of opposites, Zarathustra's eagle and serpent are an appropriate emblem for one who preaches that man is not an end but a "bridge" between below and above, between "beast and overman." Zarathustra's continual likening of man to a bridge would have been of particular interest to the poet of bridgeship. Moreover, since Wagner was one of Crane's favorite composers, he surely understood the Wagnerian resonance of Nietzsche's continual linking of the images of bridge and rainbow in relation to the overman, as, for example, when Zarathustra says, "I shall show them the rainbow and all the steps to the overman" (136), or when he asks, "Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?" (163).

The reference here, of course, is to the ending of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (1869) and the rainbow-bridge ("*Regenbogenbrücke*") across the Rhine leading to Wotan's new castle Valhalla, the rainbow-bridge created by Donner, the god of thunder, and his brother Froh, the god of rain, out of a

magic thunderstorm ("*Gewitterzauber*"). According to the opera's stage directions, Donner "disappears in an ever thickening and darkening thundercloud. Then his hammer-stroke is heard to fall heavily on the rocks: a vivid flash of lightning breaks through the clouds, followed by a violent clap of thunder." Donner calls for his brother Froh to join him, and suddenly as the clouds separate, "from their feet stretches, in blinding radiance, a rainbow-bridge over the valley to the castle, which now gleams with utmost brilliance, illumined by the evening sun."[1] Clearly, Nietzsche considered this scene as an allusive background not only to Zarathustra's image of "the rainbow and the bridges of the overman" but also to his remark that he would "teach men the meaning of their existence—the overman, the lightning out of the dark cloud of man" (*Zarathustra* 132). And this allusion to the ending of *Rheingold* also invokes the opera's larger context as a general background for *Zarathustra,* which is to say, invokes the overall meaning of the *Ring* cycle of which *Rheingold* is a part, along with *Die Walküre* (1870), *Siegfried* (1876), and *Die Götterdämmerung* (1876). For of course the action that begins in *Rheingold,* when the gnome Alberich steals the gold guarded by the Rhine maidens and fashions from it a magic ring that makes its wearer ruler of the world, ultimately unleashes, as various characters vie for its possession, a wave of greed, destruction, and death that reveals in retrospect that the gods' crossing of the rainbow-bridge to Valhalla was a retreat from this world into a false dream of security, where they are finally consumed when the flames from Siegfried's funeral pyre (into which the self-sacrificing Brünnehilde has ridden after returning the magic ring to the waters of the Rhine) ignite the Great Hall of the Gibichungs and finally engulf Valhalla to complete the passing of the old gods.

Nietzsche's use of the *Ring* cycle as an allusive background for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* derives from a central resemblance between the two works. Just as the death of God is the precondition for Zarathustra's preaching the continued existence of the category "over man" and its coming unspecified occupant, so the passing away of the old gods in Valhalla is the precondition for that coming unspecified good (the rebirth of the world?) that has been prophesied as resulting from Brünnehilde's redemptive sacrifice of herself for love. In effect, both works are about the new world that follows the death of the old gods.

Crane would have been particularly alert to the *Ring* cycle's allusive presence in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* given the resemblance of the *Ring*'s main theme to the Astraea-Virgo myth Crane evokes as an allusive background to *The Bridge*. The gods' retiring across the rainbow-bridge to Valhalla at the end of *Rheingold* becomes by the end of the *Ring* cycle their departure and ultimate vanishing from a world in which greed and murder run rampant in the struggle to possess the ring, which represents the destructive power of greed. This scenario recalls the circumstances of Astraea's flight to the heavens. And certainly Crane understood the passage in which Zarathustra says, "Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence? Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it be this woman

I love: for I love you O eternity" (*Zarathustra* 340). He understood it as an antithetical allusion to the greedy, destructive pursuit of the ring of the Nibelungen in Wagner, especially since the price of Alberich's being able to seize the Rhine gold and forge it into a ring is, as the Rhine maidens warn him, that he must renounce forever the love of woman. Indeed, Nietzsche's antithetical allusion to the Nibelungen's golden ring in his image of "the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence" is part of the resonance of Columbus's lines in "Ave Maria": "This turning rondure whole, this crescent ring / Sun-cusped and zoned with modulated fire / Like pearls that whisper through the Doge's hand" (36). Recall that Columbus, gazing at the sea and sky from the deck of his ship on its return voyage from the New World, can see the spherical nature of the deity who created the universe reflected in the arcs and circles that surround him (the circle of the horizon, the zodiac, the dome of the heavens, the orbit of the planets). And "this turning rondure whole" is compared to a "crescent ring"—both to a ring inscribed with a semicircle, in token of the way that circles are intuited from their arcs throughout the poem, and to an ever-increasing (*crescent* from Latin, *crescere,* to increase) ring, in token of the way circles are surrounded by ever-larger circles in this Platonic universe, as if one dropped a pebble in a pond.

This ring is also like that wedding ring which the Doge of Venice dropped into the Adriatic once a year during a ritual sacred marriage in which the city was wed to the sea (the source of Venice's livelihood), a ceremony alluded to in section 6 of Whitman's "Passage to India," where the "marriage of continents, climates, and oceans" is said to be "No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic" (291). (The Doge would, of course, give his bride a wedding present, and what better gift in Crane's poem than pearls to symbolize the return to its source of wealth, taken by Venice from the sea. Clearly, this is a model, to Columbus's mind, of the way the Spanish ruler should behave with the New World he will soon possess: "Yet no delirium of jewels! O Fernando, / Take of that eastern shore, this western sea, / Yet yield thy God's, thy Virgin's charity!" [36].)

Nietzsche's evocation of *Rheingold*'s rainbow-bridge to depict man's nature in *Zarathustra* as a bridge between below and above would have been clear to Crane and probably influenced Crane's own linking of the images of bridge and rainbow, most notably, toward the end of "Cape Hatteras," where the two images are combined in the context of an explicit Wagnerian reference. The quester first salutes Walt Whitman (whose poetic wisdom has been quoted throughout the section as if he were Crane's Zarathustra) as "Our Meistersinger" who "stood up and flung the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!" (59), and then a few lines later, after declaring that Whitman's vision of "The Open Road" has been "reclaimed," the quester says, "And see! the rainbow's arch—how shimmeringly stands / Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer!" (60). Indeed, if the figure of Whitman as a "joyous seer" functions in Crane's poem in much the same way that of Zarathustra does in Nietzsche's book, then correspondingly Whitman's doctrine of the Open Road, a vision, as

Crane interprets it, of limitless future possibilities and of man's ultimate transcendence of the human condition, serves a function similar to that of Zarathustra's doctrine of man as the bridge to the overman. Although the explicit Wagnerian allusion in the lines quoted above is not a reference to one of the *Ring* operas but to the opera (*Die Meistersinger,* 1868) that premiered the year before *Rheingold* initiated the *Ring* cycle, still the image of Whitman as the Meistersinger who, by the power of his song has "flung the span . . . / Of that great Bridge, our Myth," clearly owes something as well to the ending of *Rheingold* and Donner's magical creation of the rainbow-bridge to Valhalla with a stroke of his hammer. Crane's *Meistersinger* reference here also recalls a passage from a June 1923 letter to his friends the Rychtariks in which he describes his delight in the opera's overture in terms that evoke the Nietzschean image of man as a bridge between below and above. Reporting that he has just moved into a rented room with "a fine new Victrola" and that he is "ready to begin on *The Bridge* again," Crane continues, "I can't tell you how fine I feel to get my feet on the ground again and put my nose up into the sky again for a few minutes with the *Meistersinger* Overture" (Weber, *Letters* 135), as if, feet on the ground and nose in the sky, he had himself been transformed by the magical music into a bridge between realms. Crane was so avid a reader of Whitman and so great a fan of Wagner that he would have been aware of the widespread perception of Whitman's poetry as being Wagnerian in character. In *Good-Bye My Fancy,* Whitman himself acknowledges this perception when, in noting the influence Italian opera had had on his work, he says that his friends "claim that the new Wagner and his pieces belong far more truly to me, and I to them. Very likely" (Stoval 98).

A recurring image associated with the figures of both Dionysus and Zarathustra in Nietzsche's work is the dance, and the association of ritual, communal dancing with the scenario of an ancient god's return is present throughout Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* as well. For Nietzsche, dance was, of course, one of the principal expressions of Dionysian frenzy, that ecstatic or intoxicated overcoming of the individual self's limits in order to be united with an inexhaustible principle of Life even at the expense of the individual life. And for Nietzsche's Zarathustra, dance is an ongoing image of the nimbleness, freedom, and light-heartedness of his thought, of all that is opposed to false solemnity and self-important gravity, and also an image of all that celebrates the body. At one point Zarathustra says, "I would believe only in a god who could dance . . . Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me" (153). And at another point, he describes himself as "Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light" who "waves with his wings, ready for flight" (406). For Zarathustra (whose figurations influenced Yeats's dance imagery), dance embodies the right relationship between soul and body, the wedding of "a powerful soul to which belongs the high body, beautiful, triumphant, refreshing, around which everything becomes a mirror—the supple, persuasive body, the dancer whose parable and epitome is the self-enjoying soul" (*Zarathustra* 302). And this image of the dance as a rendering visible of the

sacred marriage of spirit and body recurs yet again, linked this time to the images of a bird's flight and a nuptial ring: "If my virtue is a dancer's virtue and I have often jumped with both feet into golden-emerald delight; . . . and if this is my alpha and omega, that all that is heavy and grave should become light; all that is body, dancer; all that is spirit, bird—and verily, that is my alpha and omega: Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?" (342–43)

It is obviously a short step from Zarathustra, whose animals are the eagle and serpent and who believes "only in a god who could dance" and sees the dance as embodying a marriage of opposites, to Maquokeeta, who performs an Indian rain dance during which he identifies himself with the eagle and the snake, becomes one with the sky/rain god (modeled on Quetzalcoatl), consummates a *hieros gamos* with Pocahontas in her role as earth goddess, and is immolated in a *Liebestod*. This imaginative step would have been made easier for Crane because of his acquaintance with Lawrence's dance imagery in *The Plumed Serpent*. At one point in the novel, Kate Leslie takes part in an Indian ritual in which the men and women of the village dance in two circles, one within the other:

> The outer wheel was all men . . . Men, dark, collective men, non-individual. And herself woman, wheeling upon the great wheel of womanhood . . . It was sex, but the greater, not the lesser sex. The waters over the earth wheeling upon the waters under the earth, like an eagle silently wheeling above its own shadow . . . the dark sky of men lowering and wheeling above . . . How strange, to be merged in desire beyond desire, to be gone in the body beyond the individualism of the body, with the spark of contact lingering like a morning star between her and the man, her woman's greater self, and the greater self of man. (Lawrence 140)

Later in the novel, this "round dance" is identified as "a religious dance of the return of Quetzalcoatl" (372). And this "slow round dance, . . . belonging to aboriginal America," is, like all "the old dances of the Aztecs and the Zapotecs, of all the submerged Indian races, . . . based upon the old, sinking bird-step of the Red Indians of the north" (Lawrence 279). It seems only appropriate that Don Ramon's followers should perform this round dance to celebrate a cyclically returning god who once was, who went away, and who is now coming back to begin again the round. Indeed, the notion of a circular dance is probably the associative link that connects the beginning and end of the Nietzschean passage in which Zarathustra first proclaims that his virtue is a "dancer's virtue" and closes by expressing his desire for "the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence."

This image of a circular dance, particularly as it is associated with the presence of a god, occurs at crucial moments in *The Bridge*. When Columbus affirms the immanence of God in his creation ("This disposition that thy night relates / From Moon to Saturn in one sapphire wheel"), he imagines this spherical presence as the result of the deity's cosmic dance in which heavenly bodies were spun off into their orbits ("The orbic wake of thy once whirling feet, / Elohim, still I hear thy sounding heel!" [37]).

Similarly, when Maquokeeta in performing the rain dance identifies himself with the Indian sky god, the god's approach is manifested by a circular wind that first worries the feathers of Maquokeeta's headdress ("A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest, / Swooping in eagle feathers down your back") and then strikes the forest as the storm begins ("The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves; / The long moan of a dance is in the sky" [46–47]). But Maquokeeta's dance involves another kind of circularity as well, for the poetic quester has traveled back into the past, identifying himself with the Indian chieftain, in order to recover a sense of aboriginal earliness ("Medicine-man, relent, restore— / Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!" [47]), with the dance circularizing time until at its conclusion Maquokeeta has become "pure serpent, Time itself, and moon / Of his own fate" (47), as if the serpent of Time had bitten its own tail and become the Amerindian symbol of eternity, of time's end joined to its beginning.

When Kate Leslie participates in the Indian "round dance," she describes its state of rhythmic, communal autointoxication as being like "a beautiful slow wheel of dance, two great streams streaming in contact, in opposite directions" (Lawrence 140). This experience of overcoming the individualism of the body through the body's rhythmic absorption in a larger group, considered as a token of the individual life's willingly accepted absorption in the larger process of life's continual renewal, is part of what Nietzsche understood by the Dionysian intoxication embodied in the dance. Kate Leslie's sense of this dance as a sacred marriage of two great streams flowing in opposite directions foreshadows her own participation, later in the novel, in a *hieros gamos* (her marriage to Don Ramon's friend General Cipriano Viedma), a marriage that takes place, not unexpectedly, in a garden in a driving rainstorm. In this ritual, Don Ramon, a man identified with the god, presides over the ceremony as the living Quetzalcoatl, and similarly Cipriano participates as the living Huitzilopochtli (the Aztec war god who, as Spence noted, took over some of Quetzalcoatl's features as a fertility or rain god) and Kate, as his consort Malintzi, in a symbolic union of sky and earth:

> "Barefoot on the living earth, with faces to the living rain," said Ramón in Spanish, quietly; "at twilight, between the night and the day; man, and woman, in presence of the unfading star, meet to be perfect in one another. Lift your face, Caterina, and say: *This man is my rain from heaven . . .* "
>
> "This woman is the earth to me—say that, Cipriano," said Ramón, kneeling on one knee and laying his hand flat on the earth . . .
>
> He made Kate put over Cipriano's head a blue cord bearing a little symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the snake in silver and the bird in blue turquoise. Cipriano put over her head the same symbol . . .
>
> "There!" said Ramón. "That is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the Morning Star. Remember the marriage is the meeting-ground, and the meeting-ground is the star. If there be no star, no meeting-ground, no true coming together of man with the woman, into a wholeness, there is no marriage." (Lawrence 352–54)

(The image of the Morning Star as the meeting ground of man and woman sheds further light on the ending of "Harbor Dawn," where the poetic quester, awakening from his dream of sexual union with the mysterious woman, sees the morning star and makes it a sign of their eventual reunion ["Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star— / As though to join us at some distant hill— / Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep," 39].) And it is this same star the quester sees on entering the Indian world of "The Dance" and recovering his mysterious lover Pocahontas: "And one star, . . . / Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass— / Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn" (46).

The male-female, rain-earth imagery of this wedding scene echoes an earlier communal ceremony in the novel over which Don Ramon also presided, though it was not, as with the wedding of Cipriano and Kate, a private ceremony but one involving the whole community—the invocation of the fertilizing powers at the start of the rainy season. There, Ramon began by invoking the "Snake that lies in the fire at the heart of the world, come! Come!" (Lawrence 210). And he tells the people, "Let him send life into your feet and ankles and knees, like sap in the young maize pressing against the joints and making the milk of the maize bud among its hair" (211). Ramon then invokes the eagle of the air:

> "Come! . . . roaming Bird of the Beyond, with thunder in your pinions and the snake of lightning in your beak . . .
>
> "The earth is alive, and the sky is alive . . . and between them, we live . . .
>
> "But as in the morning the Morning-star stands between earth and sky, a star can rise in us . . .
>
> "The Morning Star is sending you a messenger, a god who died in Mexico . . .
>
> "Quetzalcoatl is coming with a new body, like a star, from the shadows of death." (Lawrence 213–15)

Unlike Zarathustra's alpha-omega symbol of the serpent, wound in friendship around the neck of his soaring eagle, Ramon's "snake of lightning" is held in the beak of an eagle who bears the thunder in his wings, an evocation not only of the feathered serpent as rain god but also of that Aztec legend alluded to by the central emblem in the Mexican flag—the legend that the Aztec people were told by an oracle to migrate en masse until they came to a place where they saw an eagle perched atop a cactus, holding a snake in its talons, and that there they were to found their great new city Tenochtitlan, the site of the present Mexico City.

§ 17
The *Aeneid,* Book 6, and "The Tunnel"; "Cutty Sark" and Glaucus in Ovid; Burns's "Tam o' Shanter"; Glaucus in Keats's *Endymion*

When one considers the sheer amount of allusive material that Crane has layered beneath "The Dance" and the skill with which he has aligned the similarities in these disparate background texts to create as wide-reaching a cultural resonance as possible for the poem's central scenario (a sacred marriage of opposites metamorphosing into a *Liebestod* and ending with a stellar translation), then this section of *The Bridge* seems not only one of the peaks of Crane's art as a verse craftsman but also a miracle of allusive economy, equal, if not superior, to anything in *The Waste Land.* And this same allusive compression characterizes Crane's subsequent use of Book 6 of the *Aeneid* (and related texts) as a classical background for "The Tunnel."

As we noted, the first level of allusion in "The Tunnel" is to Faust's underworld descent to retrieve Helen in Goethe's verse play and to her subsequent return there to be with their dead son Euphorion. The allusive level below this is *The Divine Comedy* and Dante's descent into the underworld in the company of Virgil, a background Crane self-consciously invokes when he obliquely describes the mournful crowd in the subway station: "The intent escalator lifts a serenade / Stilly / Of shoes, umbrellas, each eye attending its shoe" (69). The phrase "each eye attending its shoe" echoes a passage in Eliot's *The Waste Land* that describes early-rising Londoners crossing the Thames on their way to work: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many. / Sighs, short and infrequent were exhaled, / And each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (Eliot, *Complete* 39)—a passage whose second and third lines are themselves allusions to Cantos 3 and 4 of the *Inferno,* respectively, as Eliot points out in his footnotes to the poem, allusions that bracket Dante's crossing of the dismal river that is the limit of the underworld. Crane sent "The Tunnel" to Eliot's magazine *The Criterion,* and Eliot published it in November 1927. However, Crane makes little use of this second, Dantesque level of allusion in "The Tunnel," invoking it mainly to establish a link between his own method of layering structures on top of one another and Eliot's "mythical method" and also to acknowledge the debt he and Eliot owed in this regard to Dante's use of the *Aeneid* in the *Inferno.*

The third level of allusion in "The Tunnel" is, of course, to the *Aeneid,* Book 6, with the poetic quester's vision of Poe during the subway ride paralleling Aeneas's meeting with his father. But in contrast to the underworld encounter of Aeneas and Anchises (whose prophetic revelation concerns the founding of a city and a line of descendants), the imaginary encounter between Poe and the quester turns upon imagery of a city sunk beneath the sea (which may or may not rise again) and the notion not of a physical line of descendants (since both Poe and Crane were childless) but of a spiritual line of visionaries (a structure in which the originary Poe is treated as a

father figure by the quester in much the same way that the visionary Whitman was invoked as the elder brother in "Cape Hatteras").[1]

However, Crane does not confine his modern allusions to Aeneas's subterranean journey only to "The Tunnel" section nor does he limit himself to alluding only to Virgil's account of Aeneas's adventures. Take, for example, "Cutty Sark," where the quester drinks all night with an old sailor in a speakeasy and then finds, through the Dionysian power of intoxication, that he is able on leaving the bar at dawn to have an imaginative vision of the bygone clipper ships as if through the old sailor's eyes. Yet the section begins with this striking, somewhat puzzling description of those eyes:

> I met a man in South Street, tall—
> a nervous shark tooth swung on his chain.
> His eyes pressed through green glass
> —green glasses, or bar lights made them
> So—
> shine—
> GREEN—
> eyes— (51)

This thrice-repeated emphasis on the color green in relation to the sailor's eyes becomes less puzzling when one realizes that in all likelihood it is an allusion to a mythological figure Virgil mentions in connection with Aeneas's underworld descent. Virgil's account identifies the Cumaean Sibyl, Aeneas's underworld companion, as a priestess of Apollo named Deiphobe, the daughter of Glaucus (1:509). Given that the Sibyl is a prophetess, it seems fairly certain that the Glaucus referred to is the sea god who possessed prophetic powers. Crane knew his story from Book 13 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* where it is narrated as a digression in the account of Aeneas's voyages. At the point where Aeneas's ship enters the Straits of Messina and passes between the rock and the whirlpool known respectively as Scylla and Charybdis, Ovid tells of Glaucus's unhappy love for the maiden Scylla and of her transformation.

Glaucus had been a fisherman from Anthedon in Euboea, and one day while fishing from a verdant meadow beside the sea he noticed that the fish he had caught and laid on the grass suddenly reanimated and leapt back into the water. As Glaucus tells it:

> Had some god done this, or was it the grasses' juice? "And yet what herb could have such potency?" I said, and plucking some of the herbage with my hands, I chewed what I had plucked. Scarce had I swallowed the strange juices when suddenly I felt my heart trembling within me, and my whole being yearned with desire for another element. Unable long to stand against it, I cried aloud: "Farewell, O Earth, to which I shall nevermore return!" and I plunged into the sea. The sea-divinities received me, deeming me worthy of a place with them, and called on Ocean and Tethys to purge my mortal nature all away. (*Ovid* 4:295)

(One can imagine that Crane's eye would have been caught by the Ocean and Tethys reference in this passage, given his epigraph for "Ave Maria.")

Once the mortal Glaucus is changed to a sea god, his beard turns a "dark green hue," the color of the sea (as presumably does his whole body, eyes included), and his "locks . . . sweep on the long waves" (*Ovid* 4:297). And since Glaucus, after eating the green meadow grass, says that he can "nevermore return" to land, he serves as a classical forerunner of the old sailor in "Cutty Sark" who tells the poetic quester, "No—I can't live on land—!" (52). The old sailor is certainly meant to be seen as either the young man Larry (now grown older) from the preceding "Indiana" section (the farm boy who runs away to sea) or else his symbolic descendant.[2] In Ovid's account Glaucus tries to woo the maiden Scylla, but she is frightened and flees, so Glaucus goes to the enchantress Circe for a charm or potion to win Scylla. Instead, Circe falls in love with Glaucus, and when he rejects her advances, Circe turns "her wrath upon the girl who was preferred to her" (*Ovid* 4:303), poisoning the pool where Scylla bathes. Scylla is transformed first into a monster with gaping dogs' heads growing from her waist and then is "changed into a rock" that is "the sailors' dread" (4:305) in the Straits of Messina. At this point in Book 14 of the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid ends the story of Glaucus and Scylla and returns to his account of Aeneas's voyage, summarizing in the poem's next twenty-five lines Aeneas's passage through the straits, his journey to Libya, his disastrous liaison with Dido at Carthage, the death of his ship's pilot, and his approach to Cumae. Then, in the poem's next fifty lines, Ovid recounts Aeneas's meeting with the Sibyl, his plucking the golden bough, his descent to the underworld in the Sibyl's company to visit the shade of his father and receive a vision of the future, his return to the upper world, and his conversation with the Sibyl along the way.

In linking the figure of the old sailor in the speakeasy with that of Ovid's Glaucus, Crane was not only alluding to the Ovidian connection of Glaucus and Scylla with Aeneas (thereby setting the stage for his own use of Aeneas's underworld journey), he was also aiming to make aspects of the quester's encounter with the old sailor rhyme with Glaucus's story. Thus, just as the mortal, Glaucus, eats the grass whose juices transform him into a god with prophetic powers, so the poetic quester drinks whiskey (a fiery, enlightening liquid distilled not from grass but from golden-haired grain) and has a godlike insight into the old sailor's life, allowing his vision of the clipper ships.

This layering of Ovid's Glaucus beneath the figure of the old sailor is only the start of a complex series of allusive resonances Crane sets up here, for what Crane aimed to produce in "Cutty Sark" (the section that he identified as the exact midpoint of *The Bridge*) was a network of cross-references tying together the various quest journeys layered beneath his epic's action. Or more precisely, what he meant these allusions to bring to the reader's attention was a network of cross-references that already existed among the narratives of these earlier quest journeys as each successive narrative invoked an earlier one as its predecessor. The disjunctiveness that characterizes many of the lines in "Cutty Sark" is partly a function of Crane's rendering the fragmentary quality of the old sailor's drunken con-

versation but also a function of the sheer range and number of background texts Crane links together at this midpoint, a network of allusive backgrounds that reaches backward to that original act of multiple naming in "To Brooklyn Bridge" and forward to that culminating one in "Atlantis."

"Cutty Sark"'s title evokes, as we noted earlier, both the eponymous Scotch whiskey (Crane's favorite brand) and the famous clipper ship for which the whiskey was named. But the name of the clipper was taken from a phrase in the Scots poet Robert Burns's poem "Tam o' Shanter," a poem that, apropos the situation in Crane's "Cutty Sark," recounts the adventures of a man who has spent the day drinking with his friends and then, still under the influence, sets off near midnight in a storm to ride home. Tam passes by an abandoned church and sees a witches' coven: "Warlocks and witches in a dance" (Burns 491), with the Devil himself playing the bagpipes. Tam's eye is caught by a young witch named Nannie dressed in "her cutty sark," a short shift "that while a lassie she had worn / In longitude tho' sorely scanty" (493), and so aroused is Tam by her dancing that he "roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'" (494). Whereupon the whole "hellish legion," discovering his presence, give chase, meaning to destroy him, but Tam spurs his horse Maggie and barely escapes across a bridge, the witches being unable to pursue a person beyond the middle of a running stream. However, the young witch Nannie does snatch off the tail of Tam's horse at the last moment. Burns offers Tam's adventure as a cautionary tale "Whene'er to drink you are inclined / Or cutty sarks run in your mind" (495), cutty sarks being the garment witches reputedly wore when riding their broomsticks through the night air. (In a January 1927 letter to Yvor Winters, Crane explains that in the Burns poem "cutty sark" means "a short shirt," and he concludes by quoting the poem's last two lines [518].)

Burns apparently based Tam on "the character and adventures of Douglas Graham (1739–1811), son of Robert Graham, . . . tenant of the farm of Shanter on the Carrick shore, and owner of a boat which he named Tam o' Shanter" (Woods 1215). Thus, a boat gives its name to an eighteenth-century Scots poem about the extraordinary things a man sees after drinking all day, and a phrase from that poem becomes in turn the name of a boat (the clipper *Cutty Sark* with the figure carved on its prow of the young witch Nannie holding a horse's tail in her hand), and the clipper in turn gives its name to a Scotch whiskey, and then the clipper and the whiskey give their name to a twentieth-century American poem about the extraordinary vision the poetic quester has of nineteenth-century clipper ships after drinking all night with the old sailor. And the connection between the garment cutty sark (worn by witches when flying through the air), the clipper ship, and the name of an enlightening liquor that enables vision meshes perfectly with Crane's image complex of winged flight and ocean voyaging (considered as visionary activities) that runs throughout the poem (winged flight being literally visionary in the sense that the higher you rise in the air, the farther you see). (Recall that Crane sets up this conjunction of wing and sail at the very start when he describes "*the seagull's wings*" soaring above the Statue of Liberty as being "*apparitional as sails that cross / Some*

page of figures to be filed away" [33] and continues it in the "Ave Maria" section when the Indians greet Columbus's sailing ships as "The Great White Birds" [35]. And it culminates in "Cape Hatteras" where the description of the airplane's flight and the proleptic vision of space travel balance and extend the impulse of Columbus's oceangoing voyage of discovery in "Ave Maria.") Crane underlines this linking of winged flight and ocean voyaging when the old sailor in "Cutty Sark" tells the quester his ship is named the "S.S. *Ala*" (51)—*ala* being the Latin word for "a bird's wing."

Among the texts layered beneath "Cutty Sark," Crane has inserted, in between the twentieth-century level of the old sailor and the ancient level of Ovid's story of Glaucus, an allusive layer from nineteenth-century English romantic poetry—the story of Glaucus and Scylla from Keats's *Endymion.* In Book 1 of the poem the shepherd-prince Endymion sees a golden-haired woman in a dream vision (given the connection of golden hair and grain with a figure such as Demeter, should we be surprised that this woman's hair is said to be brighter than "oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun"?) (Keats 79), then sees her face again in the depths of "a clear well" (86), and on a third occasion enjoys her embraces in a cavern. Hopelessly in love with the mysterious woman, Endymion goes in search of her, ultimately discovering that the Indian maiden whom he meets and falls in love with in Book 4 is in fact the woman of his dream vision, the goddess Diana, variously addressed as Cynthia and Phoebe in Keats's poem. (One sees immediately the parallels between Endymion's quest and that of Crane's protagonist who has a dream vision of a woman in "Harbor Dawn" ["*there in a / waking dream / to merge your seed / —with whom? / Who is the / woman with / us in the / dawn*?" 38–39], a woman he must pursue until in "The Dance" he discovers his mysterious lover is another Indian maiden, Pocahontas, a figure whom Crane associates with the crescent moon, the same celestial body with which Keats associates Endymion's lover.)

In Book 2 Endymion prays to Cynthia, the moon goddess, for aid in his quest, and a mysterious voice from a cavern tells him he must journey into the earth's "deep abyss": "descend! He ne'er is crown'd / With immortality, who fears to follow / Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow, / The silent mysteries of earth, descend!" (93). (One thinks of the last words of the "Quaker Hill" section ["descend, descend"] that lead into the quester's own subterranean journey and of Goethe's *Faust,* where Faust is told to "Descend" in his quest for Helen in the classical underworld.) In the rest of Book 2, the love stories of Venus and Adonis and of Alpheus and Arethusa (which is to say, stories of immortals in love with mortals) are recounted as Endymion's underground quest brings him in contact with the principals of each tale, and then in Book 3 Endymion finds himself beneath the sea where he encounters "an old man sitting calm and peacefully" upon "a weeded rock" (116).

The old man is Glaucus, who tells Endymion of his transformation, of his love for Scylla, her flight, and his seeking aid from the enchantress Circe. But at this point Keats's account differs from Ovid's, for when Glaucus rejects Circe's love she puts a curse on him: he immediately grows

old and infirm and must remain so for a thousand years before he can die. Soon he discovers that Circe has also avenged herself on his true love, for he finds Scylla's drowned body in the sea and takes it to an underwater cavern. During the term of his long curse, Glaucus discovers a magic book that prophesies a possible release from his condition. He must pursue "*a task of joy and grief / Most piously*" taking "*all lovers*" who have drowned and "*deposit them side by side*" in the cavern with Scylla until the time when "*a youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led, / Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct / How to consummate all. The youth elect / Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd*" (128–29).

Recognizing that he is the youth whose coming was prophesied, Endymion exclaims to Glaucus, "We are twin brothers in this destiny!" (129). This image of the aged Glaucus and the young Endymion as twin brothers resonates beneath the relationship of the old sailor and the poetic quester in "Cutty Sark" and prepares us for the Whitmanian epigraph from "Passage to India" that opens the very next section, "Cape Hatteras": "*The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,*" a line that continues in Whitman's poem: "As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found, / The Younger melts in fondness in his arms" (Whitman 293). When Endymion and Glaucus perform the magic ritual that the prophecy had indicated, Glaucus is immediately rejuvenated, while Scylla and all the drowned lovers laid side by side with her are instantly restored to life. Endymion then accompanies Glaucus, Scylla, and the rest to a celebration in Neptune's palace.

In a letter to Malcolm Cowley dated July 29, 1926, Crane wrote, "In the middle of *The Bridge* the old man of the sea . . . suddenly comes up," adding "I enclose this section ["Cutty Sark"] hoping you'll like it" (476). Since the detail of Glaucus being transformed into an old man by Circe's curse is a feature of Keats's account but not of Ovid's, Crane's reference confirms that he had annexed Keats's romantic version of Glaucus to Ovid's ancient one, probably to make a central action from Keats's story (the rejuvenation of Glaucus and the reanimation of Scylla and the other dead lovers from beneath the sea) rhyme imagistically with the symbolic goal of the protagonist's quest in *The Bridge*—the ultimate reemergence of an Atlantis-like submerged world, the hoped-for revival or resuscitation in the lives of modern Americans of an original vision of their land's promise and possibilities.

§ 18
Time and Eternity in "Cutty Sark"; Stamboul Rose, Atlantis Rose, and Dante's Rose; *Moby-Dick* and "Cutty Sark"

In his September 1927 letter to Otto Kahn, Crane explains that "'Cutty Sark' is built on the plan of a *fugue.* Two 'voices'—that of the world of Time, and that of the world of Eternity—are interwoven in the action. The Atlantis theme (that of Eternity) is the transmuted voice of the nickel-slot

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pianola, and this voice alternates with that of the derelict sailor and the description of the action" (557). Thus, in "Cutty Sark" the voice of Time (in Roman type) introduces the voice of Eternity (in italics):

> in the nickel-in-the-slot piano jogged
> "Stamboul Nights"—weaving somebody's nickel—sang—
> *O Stamboul Rose—dreams weave the rose!*
> Murmurs of Leviathan he spoke,
> And rum was Plato in our heads . . . (51)

The italicized voice of Eternity, linked to the pianola's song "Stamboul Nights," returns three more times in the course of the poem:

> *O Stamboul Rose—drums weave—*
> . . . . . .
> *Rose of Stamboul O coral Queen—*
> *teased remnants of the skeletons of cities—*
> *and galleries, galleries of watergutted lava*
> *snarling stone—green—drums—drown—*
> . . . . . .
> *ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose,*
> *the star floats burning in a gulf of tears*
> *and sleep another thousand—* (51–52)

And just as the phrase "*dreams weave the rose*" metamorphoses through consonantal rhyme into "*drums weave*" and then through another slant rhyme into "*drums wreathe the rose,*" so the location of the woman addressed as "Rose" metamorphoses from Stamboul (the modern city of Istanbul, located on the straits of the Bosporus at the opposite end of the Sea of Marmora from the Hellespont and the site of ancient Troy, the starting point of both Aeneas's and Odysseus's voyaging) to the legendary sunken realm of Atlantis. And at the same time the word *Rose* metamorphoses from a noun (used as an epithet for, or proper name of, a woman, when the location is Stamboul) into a combination of a woman's name and the past tense of the verb *to rise* in the phrase "*ATLANTIS ROSE*"—a combination that reflects the merging (as the twin goals of the protagonist's quest) of a woman who represents the physical body of the continent and a submerged world (the pre-Columbian Amerindian "nature-world" Crane associated with the golden age).

The association of a rose with "the Atlantis theme (that of Eternity)" and with the image of a woman leading the quester on to his goal cannot help but recall the conclusion of Dante's quest in *The Divine Comedy,* where Beatrice—who had been Dante's great spiritual love since he had first seen her when he was nine—conducts Dante in the *Paradiso,* Canto 30, to the vision of blessed souls in Paradise seated in an amphitheater, an assembly imaged as a mystical rose: "Into the yellow of the eternal Rose, which rises in ranks and expands and breathes forth odor of praise unto the Sun which makes perpetual spring, Beatrice drew me" (Dante 3:343). And again at the beginning of Canto 31, Dante says, "In form then of a pure

white rose the saintly host was shown to me, which with His own blood Christ made His bride" (3:347).

This linking in "Cutty Sark" of the Dantesque rose image to the theme of eternity allows Crane to take advantage of several other associative resonances in the *Paradiso.* In Canto 31 Dante says that he has come "to the divine from the human, to the eternal from time" (3:349), and then in Canto 33 he alludes to one of Aeneas's remarks to the Cumaean Sibyl. Characterizing the aftereffect of the ultimate vision, Dante says, "my vision almost wholly fades away, yet does the sweetness that was born of it still drop within my heart. Thus is the snow unsealed by the sun; thus in the wind, on the light leaves, the Sibyl's oracle was lost" (3:375). Recall that the Cumaean Sibyl's prophecies were often written in hexameter verses on palm leaves whose order could be disrupted and thus whose ultimate significance made obscure when the leaves were blown about by the winds, and the allusion is to Aeneas's request to the Sibyl in the *Aeneid,* Book 6, "Trust not thy verses to leaves, lest they fly in disorder, the sport of rushing winds; chant them thyself, I pray" (Virgil 1:511).

Dante means for us to recall this image of the pagan Sibyl's "light leaves" disordered by the wind as a contrast to his image a little later of the Christian "Eternal Light" in whose depth he "saw ingathered, bound by love in one single volume, that which is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe: substance and accidents and their relations, as though fused together in such a way that what I tell is but a simple light" (3:377). Clearly, this image of the leaves ordered and bound together by love in the book of the universe is a development of the image of the amphitheater of the blessed whose "more than a thousand tiers," hierarchically ordered by God's love, are compared to the petals of a rose; the associative link between petals and leaves is clear. Further, in alluding to Dante's mystical rose in "Cutty Sark," Crane likely also intended for readers to recall Dante's evocation of Glaucus at the start of the *Paradiso.* In Canto 1, Dante, following his spiritual guide Beatrice, sees her "standing with her eyes all fixed upon the eternal wheels, and I fixed mine on her, withdrawn from there above. Gazing upon her I became within me such as Glaucus became on tasting of the grass that made him sea-fellow of the other gods. The passing beyond humanity may not be set forth in words: therefore let the example suffice any for whom grace reserves that experience" (3:7). As Virgil was Dante's guide in the *Inferno* and Virgil's Cumaean Sibyl was Aeneas's conductor through the underworld, so Dante, confronting his heavenly guide Beatrice, recalls these previous guides through his reference to the sea god that Virgil identifies as the Cumaean Sibyl's father. As these resonances and allusions multiply, one cannot help but be reminded of John Unterecker's remark that Crane "worked very hard to achieve" the "'significant denseness'" of his poems not only through "a complicated formal structure" but especially through "intricate multi-dimensional puns and a system of 'echoes,' repetitions, and cross references" (Unterecker 229).

But there is even more here to be unpacked in Crane's reference in "Cutty Sark" to the "Rose of Stamboul," for *Rose of Stamboul* was the name

of a Broadway musical produced by the Schuberts that opened on March 7, 1922, and ran till June 10, 1922, at the Century Theater. It was a Viennese import, originally titled *Die Rose von Stamboul* (1916), with music composed by Leo Fall (1873–1925). Sigmund Romberg wrote additional musical numbers for the Broadway production, whose script and lyrics were by Harold Atteridge. The musical takes place in the harem of Kemel Pasha in Stamboul, Turkey, as well as in the palace of Acmed Bey, and on the Riviera, with the action being pretty much what one would expect from a musical of the period: the pasha's daughter, the rose of Stamboul, is "in love with a poet, but ordered to marry a man whose name she does not recognize. The poet and the stranger prove to be one and the same" (Boardman 369). This plot twist, of course, resonates with Keats's *Endymion* (where the mysterious woman he falls in love with in his dream vision in Book 1 and the Indian maiden in Book 4 turn out to be same goddess, Diana) and with the poetic quester in *The Bridge* (where the woman he merges his seed with in his dream vision in "Harbor Dawn" turns out to be the same woman, Pocahontas, in whose sacred marriage he participates in "The Dance").[1]

There is yet another allusive layer in "Cutty Sark" that Crane meant the reader to hear echoing beneath the old sailor's conversation: the most famous sailing novel in American literature, Melville's *Moby-Dick*—not a surprising choice given that the epigraph to "Cutty Sark" ("O, the navies old and oaken / O, the Temeraire no more!") is taken from Melville's poem "The Temeraire" about the passing of the sailing vessel with the coming of the steamship. Recall that in the 1920s critics and readers were just rediscovering *Moby-Dick,* and its status as an American classic just beginning. Crane had read Melville's novel as early as 1922 (Weber, *Letters* 86), and in June 1926, just before embarking on his most intense period of work on *The Bridge,* he wrote to Waldo Frank that he had just finished rereading it for the third time and "found it more superb than ever" (465). That *Moby-Dick* exercised an enormous influence on Crane's work is attested by the number of images and phrases from the novel scattered among the poems in Crane's *White Buildings,* not to mention his homage, "At Melville's Tomb." Consequently, when the poetic quester says of the old sailor, "murmurs of Leviathan he spoke," and when the sailor himself says a few lines later that he was "a whaler once," that "that / damned white Arctic killed my time," and then suddenly exclaims, "that spiracle! . . . O life's a geyser" (51–52), we recognize the Melvillean echoes. The "damned white Arctic" recalls *Moby-Dick*'s chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale," and "that spiracle" (the blowhole behind the head of a sperm whale) recalls chapter 85, "The Fountain," Melville's meditation on the philosophical and symbolic significance of the geyser-like fountain of mist that jets from the whale's blowhole when the mammal surfaces to breathe.

In linking the image of Leviathan with Plato, Crane echoes Melville's mention of Plato in "The Fountain" chapter. Contending that the jet from the whale's spiracle is water vapor and that when on the surface the whale's head is always shrouded in such mist, Melville says that, since the whale is a creature "both ponderous and profound": "I am convinced that from the

heads of all ponderous profound beings, such as Plato, Pyrrho, the Devil, Jupiter, Dante, and so on, there always goes up a certain semi-visible steam, while in the act of thinking deep thoughts. While composing a little treatise on Eternity, I had the curiosity to place a mirror before me; and ere long saw reflected there, a curious involved worming and undulation of the atmosphere over my head" (480).

From Melville's "little treatise on Eternity" to Crane's "Atlantis theme (that of Eternity)" (weaving its way though the pianola's song with its allusions to *Moby-Dick*) seems a clear enough step, and the explicit association of a whale with Atlantis through the linking of Leviathan to Plato (that is, to the author who recorded the legend of Atlantis in his dialogue the *Critias*) also seems clear enough, but what perhaps needs further clarification is the imagistic appropriateness of associating Atlantis with the whale. Recall that Plato describes a specific topographical feature of the island continent of Atlantis: at its center Poseidon had created concentric rings of land and water (two of land, three of water) with two great fountains at the center of the central land mass. Recall as well that in the "Extracts" section at the start of *Moby-Dick* (in which Melville quotes various references to whales in world literature throughout the ages), he cites a passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "There Leviathan / Hugest of living creatures, in the deep / Stretched like a promontory sleeps or swims, / And seems a moving land" (Melville 12), and one from *Montgomery's World before the Flood* about "dread Leviathan" and other sea creatures "gather'd in shoals immense, like floating islands" (16). (Crane would have found another reference to the folkloric tradition of sailors landing on whales mistaken for islands in the work of his favorite nineteenth-century philosopher, Nietzsche. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* he writes, "Once when the sea cast them about, they thought they were landing on an island; but behold, it was a sleeping monster" [203].)

The associational link becomes clearer: Just as Atlantis, an island continent with two fountains at its center, was submerged beneath the sea by the gods because of the greed and materialism of its inhabitants but may possibly reemerge some day and the golden age be restored, so the whale, compared to "a moving land" and a "floating island," also has a fountain (the spiracle) in its back and submerges and reemerges from beneath the sea—but with this added significance for Crane's purposes: in *Moby-Dick* Melville makes the hunting of the whale for its oil indicative of nineteenth-century rapacious commercialism, with its possible hunting to extinction being implied as a submergence from which this "floating island" will never reemerge. Furthermore, the island continent of Atlantis was made up of concentric rings of land and water, so it was preeminently a land that required bridging, either by bridges over the water rings or by canals cut through the land rings. At one point in *Moby-Dick,* Melville likens the white whale itself to a bridge as the creature breaches the surface: "for an instant his whole marbleized body formed a high arch, like Virginia's Natural Bridge, . . . the grand god revealed himself, sounded, and went out of sight" (690–91).

In the passage from the pianola's song quoted earlier that begins "*ATLANTIS ROSE*," the last line is incomplete: "*the star floats burning in a gulf of tears / and sleep another thousand*—" (52). The rhyme suggests that the missing word is *years,* and the phrase a "thousand years" illustrates Crane's ability to make a single detail reverberate within several allusive layers at once. In *Endymion* a thousand years is the length of time Glaucus must suffer under Circe's curse of age and infirmity before being allowed to die (Keats 125), while in Book 6 of the *Aeneid* it is the amount of time that Anchises tells Aeneas most shades must remain in the underworld before being allowed to drink from Lethe and be reborn into the world of the bodily. In Book 14 of the *Metamorphoses,* the Cumaean Sibyl explains to Aeneas that she is old and decrepit because when she was a young girl and the god Apollo tried to win her favors by promising to grant any wish, she pointed to a pile of sand and asked to have as many years of life as there were grains in the pile but forgot to ask to be perpetually young. As a result she has already lived seven hundred years at the time of Aeneas's arrival and still has three hundred more to live before she will be allowed to die, a story alluded to in the quotation from Petronius's *Satyricon* that Eliot used as an epigraph to *The Waste Land.*

Still another allusive grace note in "Cutty Sark" comes during one of the old sailor's reminiscences: "I ran a donkey engine down there on the Canal / In Panama—got tired of that— / then Yucatan selling kitchenware—beads— / have you seen Popocatepetl—birdless mouth / with ashes sifting down—? / and then the coast again . . . " (51–52). Popocatepetl, the Mexican volcano thirty-five miles east of Mexico City, was much in the news in the 1920s due to a series of eruptions that began in 1920. Crane invokes the volcano here as a means of linking Aeneas's underworld descent to the Atlantis theme through the figure of Quetzalcoatl "the Atlantean," as Spence calls him. The name "Popocatepetl" is from the Aztec language Nahuatl and means "smoking mountain," and the volcanic mountain was regarded by the Aztecs as one of the two "special high places" (Spence, *Myths* 77) of their rain god Tlaloc, a figure often linked with Quetzalcoatl in his capacity as rain giver. Quetzalcoatl is associated with the image of a volcano in that variant of his immolation which Lawrence imagined in *The Plumed Serpent,* where the god, rather than being burned on a funeral pyre, leaps into a volcano so that "fire rose from the volcano around the old Quetzalcoatl, in wings and glittering feathers" and "Quetzalcoatl flew up, up, like a wafting flame, like a glittering bird, up into space" and became the Morning Star (Lawrence 239).

In having the old sailor describe Popocatepetl as "a birdless mouth / with ashes sifting down," Crane makes a further detail of Quetzalcoatl's departure from Mexico—that on leaving he "banished all the birds from the neighborhood of Tollan" (Spence, *Myths* 79)—rhyme with another detail from Aeneas's underworld descent. In Virgil's poem the place where Aeneas and the Sibyl descend into the lower world is Avernus, "a lake near Cumae in Campania, in an old volcanic crater. It was said that birds flying over it were killed by the fumes rising up . . . Tradition placed near

this an entrance to the lower world, hence the word [Avernus] . . . is used of the lower world itself" (Virgil 2:549, "Avernus"). Thus Virgil describes Aeneas and the Sibyl descending through "a cave . . . sheltered by dark lake and woodland gloom, over which no flying creature could safely wing their way; such a vapour from those black jaws poured into the over-arching heaven [whence the Greeks spoke of Avernus, the Birdless Place]" (1:523). From Popocatepetl as "a birdless mouth" to the cave near Avernus seems a clear enough associative step linking Quetzalcoatl's entrance into the lower world through a volcano's mouth before his translation to the Morning Star with Aeneas's entrance into the classical underworld, that dark hemisphere that the ancients believed was tipped up at night to become the starry heavens.

In invoking Popocatepetl (with its link to Quetzalcoatl), Crane is probably also setting up a further associative rhyme between Keats's story of Glaucus and the Aztec deity. In *The Gods of Mexico,* Spence, discussing the etymology of the name "Quetzalcoatl," notes that it is compounded of two elements: "The first denotes the bright green tail-feathers of the *quetzal* bird, and *coatl* = 'snake,' so that the whole implies 'feathered snake' . . . But *quetzal* in a secondary sense means 'precious,' and *coatl* is capable of being translated 'twin'" (*Gods* 144–45). Since the key moment in the meeting of Endymion and Glaucus (a figure associated with the color green) comes when Endymion exclaims, on being told his arrival will rejuvenate Glaucus, "We are twin brothers in this destiny!" (129), then the secondary meaning of Quetzalcoatl's name would probably have suggested to Crane that he could use this image of a "precious twin" to link the Aztec deity to the Glaucus/Endymion relationship and to those other figuratively fraternal pairings in *The Bridge.* Recall in this regard that in the "Cape Hatteras" section into which "Cutty Sark" leads one of the main incidents is the lyrical passage celebrating the first airplane flight, a flight made on Cape Hatteras by the Wright brothers: "There, from Kill Devils Hill at Kitty Hawk / Two brothers in their *twinship* left the dune . . . / What ciphers risen from prophetic script, / What marathons new-set between the stars!" (56, italics mine). Crane's tendency to associate brotherhood with twinning (i.e., with splitting and doubling) was apparent as early as 1923 in his poem "Recitative," where the speaker contemplates his image in a mirror: "Regard the capture here, O Janus-faced, / As double as the hands that twist this glass . . . // Twin shadowed halves: the breaking second holds / In each the skin alone, and so it is / I crust a plate of vibrant mercury / Borne cleft to you, and brother in the half" (19).

Crane likely saw the relevance of the double or twin aspect of Quetzalcoatl to Endymion's story precisely because Endymion's claim of twinship with Glaucus occurs in the context of a younger man's arrival renewing the youth and potency of an old man. That scenario would have recalled D. H. Lawrence's conflation of the two versions of Quetzalcoatl's departure, as the Aztec god, after leaping into the volcano and having his soul translated into the Morning Star, has his body laid "in the fountain that bubbles darkly at the heart of the worlds," there to sleep "the great sleep"

from which he ultimately arises as a "new man" (Lawrence 242–43). Moreover, Quetzalcoatl's replacing the departing Jesus clearly accounts for the sense of a cyclic recurrence associated with the image of sleep in the lines: "*ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose, / the star floats burning in a gulf of tears / and sleep another thousand*—" (52). In *The Plumed Serpent* the twin or double aspect of the Aztec deity is specifically invoked when the "new man" Quetzalcoatl and the old Jesus cross paths. Quetzalcoatl addresses "Brother Jesus": "Thou wert the lord of the one way . . . I am Quetzalcoatl, lord of both ways, star between day and the dark" (Lawrence 244). In his version of Quetzalcoatl and Jesus cyclically replacing one another, Lawrence adapts that variant of Quetzalcoatl's departure given by Spence in which the deity returns to his homeland on a serpent raft where "another old man awaits" him: "He and you shall speak together, and on thy return thou shalt be as a youth, yea as a boy" (Spence, *Gods* 124, and *Atlantis* 61)—the rejuvenation being accomplished in this version through the agency of another old man rather than by the arrival of a young man, as in the case of Glaucus and Endymion.

§ 19
The Historical *Cutty Sark*; Hero and Leander; Jason and the Argo; Dante and the Argo

After their night of drinking, the poetic quester and the old sailor leave the bar, and the sailor heads "up Bowery way while the dawn / was putting the Statue of Liberty out—that / torch of hers you know— // I started walking home across the Bridge . . . " (52–53). That last ellipsis, I would suggest, indicates that the quester doesn't make it home (either to Brooklyn or to an ultimate vision of a once and future origin) at this point in the poem, that he is stopped midspan by the vision of the nineteenth-century clipper ships that takes up the rest of "Cutty Sark." We know from Crane's correspondence (518) that he got most of the information on the ships included in this vision from Basil Lubbock's *The China Clippers* (1914). Lubbock chronicles the exploits of American and British clipper ships during the period 1840 to 1880, and all the ships Crane cites are vessels taken from Lubbock's account with one exception, the ship called *Nimbus. Rainbow* and *Flying Cloud* were American vessels; the former, launched in 1845 and representing a newer, sleeker design, was in Lubbock's words "celebrated as the first of the great Yankee clippers" (38), while the latter, launched in 1851, was "the most notable" of "all American clippers" (69). The other ships taken from Lubbock are all British—*Thermopylae, Black Prince, Cutty Sark, Leander, Taeping,* and *Ariel.* During the peak years of the British clippers' involvement in the China tea trade, the ships would race home to England from the Orient bringing their cargoes to market, with each ship trying to make the fastest passage in a more or less informal competition that became known as the Great Tea Race. And part of the rationale for Crane's mentioning the specific ships he does in "Cutty Sark" is that in the great

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tea race of 1866, the *Taeping* and the *Ariel* were close rivals for the honor of the fastest passage, while in the 1872 race the *Thermopylae* and the *Cutty Sark* battled for that honor. The line "Buntlines tusseling (91 days, 20 hours and anchored!)" in "Cutty Sark" refers to the nearly identical time of the *Ariel* and the *Taeping* in the 1866 race, about which Lubbock remarked, "It is possible that no race ever sailed on blue water created so much excitement" (217).

The *Thermopylae,* "the pride of the British Merchant Service" (274), was launched in 1868, while the *Cutty Sark,* whose owner Captain John Willis had commissioned her design and construction specifically to beat the *Thermopylae,* was launched in 1869. In the great tea race of 1872, "both vessels left Shanghai . . . within an hour or two of each other" (339) and "when racing home, . . . were within a few hours of each other from Shanghai right down to the Cape, where *Cutty Sark,* when leading," lost her rudder in a gale (157). "This race . . . was the beginning of a life-long rivalry in which it is difficult to say which came out on top, as whilst during the seventies *Thermopylae* made the best passages, during the eighties *Cutty Sark* made the fastest voyages of the two" (345–46).

The clipper *Leander,* launched in 1867, ran aground in Shanghai on its first voyage (260–61). After engaging in the China tea trade for most of its working life, the ship "was sold to Muscat Arabs" in the 1890s and foundered around 1895 "with her Arab crew in a cyclone when bound from Muscat to Calcutta with a load of salt" (360)—a partial explanation of the line in "Cutty Sark": "*Leander* / (last trip a tragedy)" (53).

Of all the clipper ships Lubbock memorializes, clearly, the *Cutty Sark* is his favorite. Not only did she hold the record for the best day's run among all clippers, she was at the time of his writing in 1914 "the only ship out of the whole tea fleet . . . still afloat—and not only afloat but still earning her living on the great waters" (372). After her glory days, first in the China tea trade and then in the Australian wool trade, the *Cutty Sark* was sold in 1895, and for the next twenty-seven years "she flew the flag of Portugal" before being bought by an English captain and restored "to her original state as a full-rigged clipper ship" in 1924 (Carr 14). She was eventually acquired by the Cutty Sark Preservation Society and anchored in 1954 at a special dock constructed for her in Greenwich, England. She was damaged by a fire in 2007 but remains today the only surviving China clipper.

In giving this much space to the factual information available in Lubbock's book, I want to suggest how Crane, on the one hand, used this data to create a sense of authenticity for the quester's vision of the nineteenth-century clippers and, on the other, shaped it to fit into "Cutty Sark"'s complex system of echoes and cross references. Thus, in the former case he incorporates facts (such as the lengthy rivalry between the clippers *Taeping* and *Ariel* for "Cutty Sark"'s closing lines ["and you rivals two— / a long tack keeping— / *Taeping*? / *Ariel*?"] and their near identical times in the great tea race of 1866) as well as some of Lubbock's nautical terminology (as in Crane's description of the clippers that "ran their eastings down" [53], where one hears Lubbock's phrase that the *Thermopylae*'s best day's run

was "358 knots, made when running easting down" [155]). Certainly, the pride of place that Lubbock gives the *Cutty Sark* (as being the fastest and the sole-surviving clipper) as well as all the information he provides (i.e., her name being taken from Burns's poem "Tam o' Shanter," an explanation of the term *cutty sark,* and a description of the ship's figurehead carving of the beautiful young witch Nannie) clearly influenced Crane's decision to make the ship the centerpiece of the quester's vision as "Perennial-*Cutty*-trophied-*Sark*!" (53).

Of course, Crane's decision was also influenced by how the link between the clipper and the Scotch whiskey named for it fit in with his poem's image complex of intoxication, prophetic vision, and voyaging. We can see Crane's further shaping for poetic purposes of the factual material from Lubbock in a line such as "*Leander* / (last trip a tragedy)" (53), where the reference is not only to the real clipper *Leander*'s foundering in a cyclone but also to the drowning of the mythical figure Leander during his nocturnal swim across the Hellespont to visit his beloved Hero.

The story of Hero and Leander is the basis of sections 18 and 19 of Ovid's *Heroides,* a collection of fictitious letters between famous lovers, and is alluded to briefly in Virgil's *Georgics,* Book 3 (Virgil 1:173), but its fullest classical statement was the charming little epic by the poet Musaeus in the sixth century AD. The best-known retelling of the tale in English was, of course, the sixteenth-century poem *Hero and Leander* begun by Christopher Marlowe and finished by George Chapman after Marlowe's death. We know that Crane was familiar with the Marlowe-Chapman text and also probably with Keats's sonnet "On a Picture of Leander," as well as with the summary of Hero and Leander's story at the beginning of Canto two of Byron's *The Bride of Abydos,* where the poet says of the Hellespont, "These limbs that buoyant wave hath borne" (Woods 502), recalling the fact that Byron had actually swum the straits to prove the possibility of Leander's feat.

In the Marlowe-Chapman version Leander, a youth who lives in the town of Abydos on the eastern or Asia Minor side of the Hellespont, sees Hero, a priestess of Venus, at the annual feast of Adonis in her hometown of Sestos on the western or European side. Such is her beauty that he immediately falls in love with her, giving the poem its most famous line: "Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?" (*Hero* 22). She responds to his love, and that night Leander swims the Hellespont to be with Hero. Though Hero is a virgin who has sworn a vow of chastity to Venus, she ultimately surrenders to Leander, and so their nocturnal trysts begin, with Leander swimming the Hellespont guided by the torch Hero lights in her tower. Though Leander plans to bring Hero to Abydos and marry her, the Fates decree otherwise. During his last nightly swim, they send a storm, and Hero's torch, whose "bating flame . . . / nourished her Leander's life," goes "out, O out it went" (87). When Hero discovers the drowned Leander on the shore in the morning, she falls upon his body and dies, and "Neptune for pity in his arms did take them, / Flung them into the air, and did awake them / Like two sweet birds, surnamed th' Acanthides, / Which we

call thistle-warps, that near no seas / Dare ever come, but still in couples fly" (89). Though the lovers are transformed by the sea god Neptune into birds at the end of Chapman's poem, the more usual ending in the classical versions was that upon Leander's death Hero threw herself into the Hellespont and drowned. For Crane, this tale of two drowned lovers would have rhymed imagistically with Glaucus's work in Keats's *Endymion* of placing the bodies of drowned lovers side by side in the undersea cavern with his own drowned love Scylla. Moreover, this linking of Leander with Endymion's story would have been supported by Ovid's *Heroides* 18, where Leander on the night of his first swim across the Hellespont entreats the moon to light his way: "Be gracious to me, shining deity, . . . Endymion will not have thee austere of heart. Bend, O I pray, thy face to aid my secret loves. Thou, a goddess, didst glide from the skies and seek a mortal love; . . . she I seek is a goddess too" (*Ovid* 1:249).

Since the straits of the Hellespont (the modern Dardanelles) separate Europe from Asia Minor and since Leander dwelt on the Asia Minor side and Hero on the European, their mating would likely have represented for Crane a marriage of opposites like the one he depicted in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" (where the two figures represent, respectively, modern science and ancient beauty) or that marriage of Western science and Eastern wisdom which Whitman foresaw in "Passage to India" as occurring in America, the cultural land bridge between Europe and Asia. Further, as the phrase "Stamboul Nights" metamorphoses in "Cutty Sark" first into "*Stamboul Rose,*" then "*Rose of Stamboul,*" then finally into "*ATLANTIS ROSE,*" with its evocation of Crane's "theme of Eternity," this last conjunction ("*ATLANTIS ROSE*") recalls Dante's mystical rose and brings with it another Leander echo. For when Dante first enters the Garden of Eden in Canto 28 of the *Purgatorio* on his way to that vision of the mystical rose in the *Paradiso,* he meets a guide who takes over from Virgil, the lady Matelda, a prefiguration of the lady who will guide him through the *Paradiso,* his beloved Beatrice. Dante sees Matelda walking on the other side of a stream, and he says, "The river kept us three paces apart, but the Hellespont where Xerxes passed it—ever a curb on all human pride—did not suffer more hatred from Leander for its swelling waters between Sestos and Abydos than that from me because it did not open then" (Dante 2:307).

Earlier we discussed Crane's unfinished poem "To Liberty" and his effort to "build the virgin" on "this strange shore" (125) in relation to his project in *The Bridge* of personifying the American landscape's inexhaustible virginity in the figure of Pocahontas, a project that implicitly assimilated the building of his epic to the construction of the Statue of Liberty. We can now see, in light of Crane's allusion to the story of Hero and Leander in "Cutty Sark," that the images in "To Liberty" of a virgin and "her lover / A dead sailor" (presumably drowned) and of her lighting a "last torch . . . in the sea wall" more than likely derive from the images of the drowned Leander and of Hero's torch extinguished by the storm. Furthermore, Crane's choice of an epigraph for the "Three Songs" section—"The one Sestos, the other Abydos hight. Marlowe" (a misquotation of the fourth line of Mar-

lowe's *Hero and Leander,* which runs, "The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight" [17])—tends to confirm Brom Weber's suggestion that "To Liberty" with its Hero and Leander echoes was originally meant as part of "Three Songs," its place being taken by "Virginia." The image of Hero's torch extinguished by the storm also makes Crane's allusion near the end of the quester's vision—"*Leander* / (last trip a tragedy)"—echo back to the image that leads into that vision, as he and the old sailor leave the bar "while the dawn / was putting the Statue of Liberty out—that / torch of hers you know" (52).

In alluding to the drowning of Leander in the Hellespont, Crane is making one further reference to the ultimate allusive background to the quester's journey in *The Bridge,* a background prior to, and thus an allusive layer deeper than, Goethe's *Faust,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Virgil's *Aeneid,* and Homer's *Odyssey*—the voyage of the very first ship, the Argo, and the quest of Jason and the Argonauts to bring back the golden fleece from Colchis to Greece. Crane had obliquely evoked this journey early on in the epigraph to "Ave Maria," the epigraph, taken from Seneca's *Medea,* being the conclusion of the chorus's account of the principal episodes in Jason's voyage. (Prior to Seneca's *Medea* of the first century AD, Jason's story had been the subject of Euripides's play *Medea* and of Pindar's fourth Pythian ode, but the fullest treatments of it were in the Greek poet Apollonius Rhodius's epic the *Argonautica,* third century BC, and Valerius Flaccus's Latin *Argonautica,* first century AD.)

The story of the golden fleece—and the events that link Jason's voyage so inextricably with the Hellespont that any reference to it inevitably calls to mind that hero—begins when a Greek king named Athamas puts away his wife and marries the princess Ino. The first wife, Nephele, fearing that her two children, the boy Phrixus and the girl Helle, may be killed by Ino, prays to Hermes, who sends a ram with a fleece of pure gold to snatch the children up and carry them away through the air. But while they are crossing the strait that separates Europe and Asia, the little girl falls off the ram's back into the water and is drowned. Henceforth, the strait is known as the Sea of Helle, the Hellespont. The ram continues on with Phrixus to the land of Colchis, where the people welcome him. The Colchian king, Aetes, marries one of his daughters to Phrixus, who sacrifices the golden ram to Zeus and gives the fleece to Aetes.

Meanwhile, Phrixus's uncle, Aeson, ruler of another kingdom in Greece, has grown tired of governing and turned the crown over to his brother Pelias to serve as regent until Aeson's son Jason comes of age. When Jason grows up and claims the throne, Pelias pretends to be willing to relinquish it but, thinking that Jason will surely be killed in such a dangerous exploit, says that first Jason must recover the golden fleece that rightfully belongs to their family. Though Jason employs Argus, "the son of Phrixus,"[1] to build the ship named for him, "the goddess Athene herself superintended its construction, and inserted in the prow a piece of oak from Dodona, which was endowed with the power of speaking and delivering oracles" (*Britannica*

2:478). (The Argo's speaking beam is clearly the referent of the fourth line in the following passage from "Atlantis": "And you, aloft there—Jason! hesting Shout! / Still wrapping harness to the swarming air! / Silvery the rushing wake, surpassing call, / Beams yelling Aeolus! splintered in the straits!" [73].) When the Argo is completed, Jason sends out a call to all the adventurous young men of Greece to join him, and he soon has a band of fifty heroes, among whom are Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus, Nestor, Castor and Pollux, Meleager, and Peleus (Achilles's father). Embarked in the Argo, Jason and his men set sail for the land of Colchis located on the Black Sea, but during the course of their voyage they go through a series of adventures that resemble many of those Odysseus endures in the *Odyssey*. Though the ancients believed Jason and the Argonauts were one generation earlier than the heroes of the Trojan War, Homer's *Odyssey* is at least five hundred years earlier than Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica.* However, since "the story of the expedition of the Argonauts" was "very old" and since "Homer was acquainted with it and speaks of the 'Argo' as well known to all men; the wanderings of Odysseus may have been partly founded on its voyage" (*Britannica* 2:479).

In the passage from Seneca's *Medea* whose closing lines Crane cites for the epigraph to "Ave Maria," the chorus mentions three of Jason's principal adventures, two of which parallel those of Odysseus—one an encounter with the Sirens and the other a passage between Scylla and Charybdis in the straits of Messina, though the chorus refers only to Scylla ("her waist begirt with ravenous dogs, opened all her gaping throats together" [Seneca 1:259]), a reference that would have echoed in Crane's use of the story of Glaucus and Scylla as a subtext to "Cutty Sark."

But it is the third of Jason's adventures, the Argo's passage through the Symplegades or Clashing Rocks (an adventure unique to Jason's story), that provides the key link between Crane's allusion to Leander's drowning in the Hellespont near the end of "Cutty Sark" and the evocation of Istanbul in the song "Stamboul Nights" near the poem's beginning. To reach the land of Colchis, which was located on the Black Sea, the Argo had to sail from the Aegean Sea through the straits of the Hellespont into the Sea of Marmora and then through the straits of the Bosporus at the other end of the Sea of Marmora into the Black Sea. The Symplegades were located in the straits of the Bosporus and were cliffs or islands that came together with great force, "crushing and grinding to atoms any object that might be caught between them" (Bulfinch 108). The seer Phineus, whom the Argonauts had saved from the Harpies, "instructed the Argonauts how to pass this dangerous strait" (Bulfinch 108). When they reached the Symplegades, "they let go a dove, which took her way between the rocks, and passed in safety, only losing some feathers of her tail. Jason and his men seized the favourable moment of the rebound, plied their oars with vigor, and passed safe through" (Bulfinch 108), though the clashing rocks snapped off the extreme end of the Argo's stern ornament (the apparent referent of the line about Jason from the "Atlantis" section quoted earlier: "splintered in the

straits!" [73]). However, once the Argo passed through them, the clashing rocks of the Symplegades became fixed in place, never again obstructing the passage of ships.

Clearly, then, for Crane the connection in "Cutty Sark" between the allusion to Leander and the reference to Stamboul was Jason's passage through the straits of the Hellespont (the site of Leander's drowning named for Jason's first cousin, Helle) at one end of the Sea of Marmora and the straits of the Bosporus (where Istanbul is located) at the other end. And of course, as we noted earlier, the importance of Jason's voyage for the overall theme of *The Bridge* is that the journey of the first ship, ushering in an era of plunder and commerce, represented the end of the golden age. Or, in the words of the chorus in *Medea*: "Unsullied the ages our fathers saw, with crime banished afar. Then every man inactive kept to his own shores and lived to an old age on ancestral fields, rich with but little, knowing no wealth save what his home soil had yielded" (Seneca 1:257). But when the Argo was launched, "the lands, well separated before by nature's laws, the Thessalian ship made one, bade the deep suffer blows, and the sequestered sea become a part of our human fear" (1:257–59). And just in case Seneca's audience missed the point about the transgressive nature and calamitous results of the Argo's voyage, the chorus ends its listing of Jason's adventures, "Of this voyage what was the prize? The golden fleece and Medea, worse evil than the sea, worthy to be the first ship's merchandise" (259).

The entry on the Argonauts in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910–11) concluded with a rationalist explanation of the facts behind the legend of Jason and the golden fleece: "In ancient times the expedition was regarded as a historical fact, an incident in the opening up of the Euxine [the Black Sea] to Greek commerce and colonization. Its object was the acquisition of gold, which was caught by the inhabitants of Colchis in fleeces as it was washed down the rivers . . . The rationalists explained the ram on which Phrixus crossed the sea as the name or ornament of the ship on which he escaped" (*Britannica* 2:479). Such an explanation would have made the lines from Seneca's *Medea* about Jason's voyage seem particularly appropriate as an epigraph for "Ave Maria," given Columbus's expression of fear that *his* voyage of discovery had opened the New World for plunder. And even more appropriate, given that "Argonaut" was a name applied to those who took part in the California gold rush of 1848–49 (a fact Crane could have learned from any American dictionary), a generic name for people with gold fever, much like the farm couple in "Indiana," who gave up cultivating their native soil to pan for gold in Colorado in 1859 with disastrous results and who passed on their willingness to abandon the land to their son who runs away to sea.

If, as I've suggested, the evocation of Leander's drowning at the end of "Cutty Sark" and the reference to Stamboul at its beginning are, between them, allusions to Jason's voyage in the Argo, then this turns out to be yet another echo of the ending of Dante's quest in *The Divine Comedy.* Referring to that image of the Sibyl's prophetic leaves scattered by the wind which he had employed earlier in Canto 33 of the *Paradiso,* Dante describes

his vision of "the Eternal Light . . . ingathered, bound by love in a single volume" (3:377). He then says that "a single moment" of that vision was such an overwhelming experience that it "makes for me greater oblivion than five and twenty centuries have wrought upon the enterprise that made Neptune wonder at the shadow of the Argo" (3:377), with Neptune's wonder at seeing the shadow of the very first ship pass over his head being implicitly evoked here as an analogue of Dante's at seeing the Eternal Light.

Of the several other clipper ships Crane mentions in the quester's vision, the real American vessel *Rainbow* and the ship named *Nimbus* (not mentioned by Lubbock) seem meant to evoke imagistic leitmotifs through their names. Thus, the rainbow image as the bridge-like arc between earth and heaven is invoked by the poetic quester in "The Dance" when he imaginatively participates in the sacred marriage of sky god and earth goddess in a rainstorm: "I, too, was liege / To rainbows currying each pulsant bone" (47). And the rainbow considered as God's visible promise after the Flood never to destroy the world again by water is the likely referent of Crane's apostrophizing the bridge in the concluding "Atlantis" section as "Forever Deity's glittering pledge" (74), a meaning that would resonate in the image of the flooded continent of Atlantis. Yet the rainbow image that is most closely connected to the clippers *Rainbow* and *Nimbus,* and that in fact links the two names imagistically, occurs in the "Cape Hatteras" section immediately following "Cutty Sark," when Crane addresses Whitman: "And see! the rainbow's arch—how shimmeringly stands / Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer! / Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear / In their own veins uncancelled thy sure tread / And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head / Of pasture-shine, *Panis Angelicus*!" (60). Here Crane again uses the part/whole relationship of arc and circle (familiar from the relationship of the dawn-illuminated arc of the bridge to the disc of the sun behind the quester's back in "To Brooklyn Bridge") to link the lighted arch of the rainbow to the lighted circle or aureole around Whitman's head, but of course the primary meaning of *aureole* is the same as that of *nimbus*—a circle of radiant light or glory about the head of a divinity or saint. And the secondary meaning of *nimbus,* that is, a rain cloud or thunderhead, directly links it to that of a rainbow and connects both back to the rain god inseminating the earth goddess in a thunderstorm in "The Dance."

Recalling Crane's statement in his 1927 letter to Otto Kahn that "Cutty Sark" was "built on the plan of a *fugue,*" with "two voices—that of the world of Time, and that of the world of Eternity— . . . interwoven in the action" (557), we can see that one of the things Crane seems to have understood by the interweaving of eternity in time was the continual recurrence of structures from the past (e.g., the quest journey, the sacred marriage of opposites, the descent into the underworld) in the present. Indeed, one might even describe this interweaving, to take a phrase from Nietzsche, as "the eternal recurrence of the same." As Crane told Kahn in that same 1927 letter, he was attempting in *The Bridge* "an assimilation" of historical "experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present" (554). To ef-

fect that assimilation, Crane had frequently to place in contiguous sections of the poem events separated in time by hundreds of years, as, for example when Crane jumps "from the monologue of Columbus in 'Ave Maria'—right across the four intervening centuries—into the harbor of 20th century Manhattan. And from that point in time and place" works "backward through the pioneer period, always in terms of the present—finally to the very core of the nature-world of the Indian" (554). Yet another example of this assimilation of present and past occurs within a single section, such as "Cutty Sark," when the twentieth-century quester travels imaginatively back in time for his vision of the nineteenth-century clipper ships, ships whose very names (such as *Thermopylae* and *Black Prince*) evoke eras prior to the nineteenth century, thus implicitly calling attention to the practice of naming contemporary things after past historical events or figures. This aspect of the act of naming, and particularly of naming considered as the poetic activity par excellence, brings into sharper focus a practice of Crane's that runs across the entire poem and that links the quester's journey to those earlier journeys of Columbus, Dante, Aeneas, Odysseus, and Jason.

§ 20
Constellations and *The Bridge*

A common figuration of the eternal is, of course, the ever-present stars in the night sky. Most of the brighter stars' names are ancient, as is the practice of grouping these chaotic points of light into patterns with designations drawn from classical mythology. Many of these constellations were employed as navigational guides by seafarers real and mythical, and their use for determining the seasons, foretelling the weather, and sailing the seas, considered as a giant step in human progress, would have been brought home to Crane in that same passage from Seneca's *Medea* whose final lines are the epigraph to "Ave Maria." The chorus, describing the human condition prior to the Argo's sailing, says, "Not yet could any read the sky and the stars with which the heavens are spangled; not yet could ships avoid the rainy Hyades; not yet did the fires of the Olenian Goat nor the Attic Wain which slow old Boötes follows and controls, not yet did Boreas, not yet did Zephyrus have names" (Seneca 1:257).

In effect the chorus suggests that it was the first ship's voyage, with its need of navigational and weather guides, that led to the ordering of stars into groups and their naming. The "rainy Hyades" mentioned by the chorus are a V-shaped cluster (located in the head of the constellation Taurus) that were considered by the ancients as indicators of bad weather during "their morning and evening setting in the latter parts of May and November; and this is their universal character in the literature of all ages" (Allen 387); while the Olenian Goat (also known as Capella) was a star of the first magnitude in the constellation that in Greek was called "Heniochus" and in Latin "Auriga" (both words meaning the "Wagoner" or "Wagon Driver"), a starry figure understood by the ancients as that of a man carrying a goat

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over his left shoulder, with the goat's position being marked by Capella. The constellation was known as the Wagoner or Wagon Driver because of its position in the northern celestial hemisphere near the constellation the Greeks saw as the Wagon or Wain. While Seneca refers to it by its older name as the "Attic Wain," the ancients also called this group of stars the "Great Bear" (Ursa Major), the constellation we call the "Big Dipper." The final constellation Seneca mentions is "slow old Boötes" who "follows and controls" the "Attic Wain," Boötes being figured as a Plowman (the literal meaning of the name in Greek), but with the figure being thought of as the Bear Keeper when the Wain was figured as the Great Bear.

We know from Crane's correspondence that he was a student of the night sky and its constellations and that he would have likely understood the logical sequence of the stars and constellations Seneca mentions (the Hyades in Taurus, the Goat in Auriga, the Attic Wain, and Boötes). These groups are adjacent to one another in the northern celestial hemisphere along a line that in the early spring runs from northwest to southeast. Crane also likely would have understood that the general direction of this sequence of constellations coming out of the northwest was again being evoked when Seneca ended his list with the names of the north wind (Boreas) and the west wind (Zephyrus).

This brief passage on the constellations from Seneca's play illustrates (in regard to Jason's voyage) what Crane from his reading would have known already existed in those other voyage narratives layered beneath *The Bridge,* which is to say, the earlier poets' invocation of constellations to establish the location, season, or time of night for a narrative's action. Thus, for example, in the *Odyssey,* Book 5, Odysseus, sailing at night, "watched the Pleiads, and the late-setting Boötes, and the Bear, which men also call the Wain, which ever circles where it is and watches Orion, and alone has no part in the baths of Ocean. For this star Calypso, the beautiful goddess, had bidden him to keep on his left hand as he sailed over the sea" (Homer 1:189). Or in the *Aeneid,* Book 3, where Aeneas describes the preparations of his steersman Palinurnus before sailing: "Nor yet was Night, driven by the Hours, entering her mid course, when Palinurnus springs, alert, from his couch, tries all the winds, and with eager ear catches the breeze; he marks all the stars gliding in the silent sky, Arcturus, the rainy Hyades, and the twin Bears, and he scans Orion, girt with golden armour" (Virgil 1:383). The constellations, then, would have been for Crane an obvious example of "the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present," an eternally recurring compendium of mythological persons and objects reflecting the background texts layered beneath his poem.

Given the literary use of constellations, we can understand the tradition within which Crane places Columbus when he has him, during his return voyage from the New World, gaze at the heavens' "cordons" of stars ("cordons" both in the sense of circular ornamental braids—think of Crane's phrase in "Atlantis," "the circular indubitable frieze / Of heaven's meditation" [73]—and of sentry outposts in a circle) and then go on to evoke the

night skies as "gleaming fields" covered with "pendant seething wheat" of stars—an oblique reference, as we suggested, to the female figure in the constellation Virgo, who holds a stalk of grain in her left hand (the star Spica).

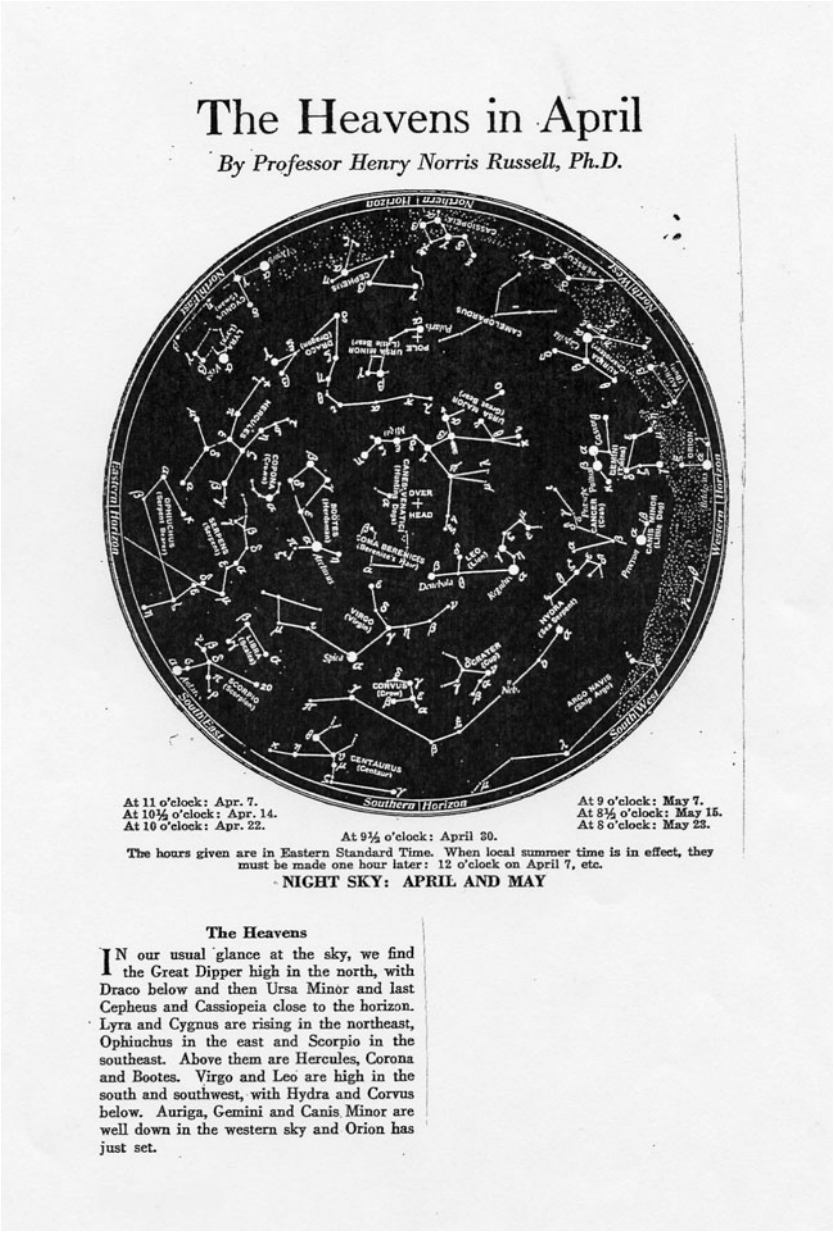
Though Columbus cites another navigational guidepost (the semicircular group of stars known as the constellation Corona Borealis or Northern Crown) as if it were the deity's diadem: "round thy brows unhooded now / —The kindled Crown!" (37), Crane, given his knowledge of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* would have been familiar with the ancient myth linking this constellation not to the Christian God but to one of the Argonauts. In Book 8 of the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid recounts how Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, after helping Theseus kill the Minotaur in his labyrinth, fled with Theseus and was abandoned by him on the island of Dia: "To her, deserted and bewailing bitterly, Bacchus brought love and help. And, that she might shine among the deathless stars, he sent the crown she wore up to the skies. Through the thin air it flew; and as it flew its gems were changed to gleaming fires and, still keeping the appearance of a crown, it took its place between the Kneeler and the Serpent-holder" (*Ovid* 3:419), the Kneeler and the Serpent-holder being, respectively, the constellations Hercules and Ophiuchus. And since Theseus and Hercules were both Argonauts, Columbus's invocation of the Corona Borealis is yet another allusion to that first ship's voyage evoked in "Ave Maria"'s Senecan epigraph.

Such an allusion would have seemed only appropriate under the circumstances, for Columbus, during his return voyage through the Caribbean Sea, would have seen on the southern horizon the constellation Argo Navis (the Ship Argo), a large star group made up of four component constellations—Carina (the Keel), Puppis (the Stern), Vela (the Sails), and Pyxis (the Mariner's Compass)—and near the stern of the constellation Argo Navis he would have seen the constellation Columba (the Dove), the bird Jason sent through the Symplegades and whose tail feathers were clipped when the Clashing Rocks came together, just as the Argo's stern ornament was clipped. This latter constellation would also have had a particular significance for Columbus, since his own name was simply the masculine form of the Latin word *Columba.* Moreover, given that one of the component constellations of Argo Navis is Vela (the Sails), Columbus's image of the stars as "heaven's cordons, mustering / In holy rings all sails charged to the far" (37) is likely an evocation of these starry sails as a figure of that further celestial voyage that Columbus, having achieved his earthly goal of discovery only to find that there is "still one shore beyond desire," must make: a voyage at death. Indeed, one can judge how close the link was between ancient seafaring and the naming of constellations simply by noting how many star groups are connected to the myth of Jason and the Argo: in addition to Corona Borealis, Argo Navis, and Columba, there are the constellations Hercules (one of the Argonauts), Gemini (the Twins, i.e., Castor and Pollux, two more of the Argonauts), Aries (the Ram, thought by the ancients to be the ram with the golden fleece that carried Phrixus to Colchis), and, as we shall see, Lyra and Crater.

We know from Crane's correspondence that during the summer and early fall of 1926 when he was at his grandmother's plantation on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, and enjoying his most productive and sustained period of work on *The Bridge,* the constellations and their associated mythology played an important part in the construction of the poem. In a letter to Waldo Frank dated August 3, 1926, Crane says that he has just sent a copy of "the 'Dedication' and 'Ave Maria'" to Otto Kahn. (The "Dedication" apparently was the introductory poem "To Brooklyn Bridge"—he had sent a stanza completing that section in an earlier letter to Frank dated July 24, 1926.) He adds, "the angle chart from *The Scientific Am[erican]* embodies a complete symbolism of both Bridge and Star, even including the motif of the 'holy tooth.' And I should like to use it on the cover" (479). The "angle chart" was undoubtedly the star chart that appears in every issue of the *Scientific American* showing that month's positions of the constellations in the night sky; the name of this ongoing feature in the magazine in 1926 was "The Heavens in [name of month] by Professor Henry Norris Russell, Ph.D." Since we do not know the specific month Crane was referring to in the letter to Frank, I have reproduced these charts from the April and June 1926 issues of the magazine (figs. 20.1 and 20.2) to give some idea of the constellations Crane thought embodied "a complete symbolism of both Bridge and Star, even including the motif of the 'holy tooth.'" And because Crane prefaces his remarks about the "angle chart" by mentioning that he has just sent off the introductory poem and "Ave Maria" to Kahn, it is likely that the importance of the constellations for a navigator like Columbus had led Crane to include references to specific constellations in "Ave Maria," and further, that this may have suggested the use of such references as a structural motif throughout *The Bridge.*

In "To Brooklyn Bridge," for example, Crane describes the bridge during the circuit of a day and night (beginning at dawn in the first stanza and ending late at night in stanzas 10 and 11), with darkness just starting to fall in stanza 8 and 9: "*O harp and altar, of the fury fused, / (How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!) / Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge, / Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,— // Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift / Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars*" (46). The image of the bridge as a "*harp and altar*" evokes the structure with its steel cables (its "*choiring strings*" strummed by the wind) as a gigantic Aeolian harp, on the one hand, and, on the other, as an altar-like, raised platform swung from the two stone towers, whose gothic arches are reminiscent of a cathedral. But given that the imagery of the next stanza figures "*the traffic lights*" on the bridge and the lights strung along its cables as stars—and ones with a specifically Marian association (an "*immaculate sigh of stars / Beading thy path*"), an image suggesting the bridge's relation to the constellation Virgo and its connection to the Virgin Mary—we can see that Crane in effect presents the lighted bridge as a kind of modern constellation (Pons Brooklyniensis) that is linked to other star groups through a variety of associations.

Thus in comparing the bridge to a harp and altar, he relates it to two constellations that are mythologically significant for the poem—Lyra (the



The Heavens in April

By Professor Henry Norris Russell, Ph.D.

At 11 o'clock: Apr. 7.
At 10½ o'clock: Apr. 14.
At 10 o'clock: Apr. 22.

At 9 o'clock: May 7.
At 8½ o'clock: May 15.
At 8 o'clock: May 23.

At 9½ o'clock: April 30.

The hours given are in Eastern Standard Time. When local summer time is in effect, they must be made one hour later: 12 o'clock on April 7, etc.

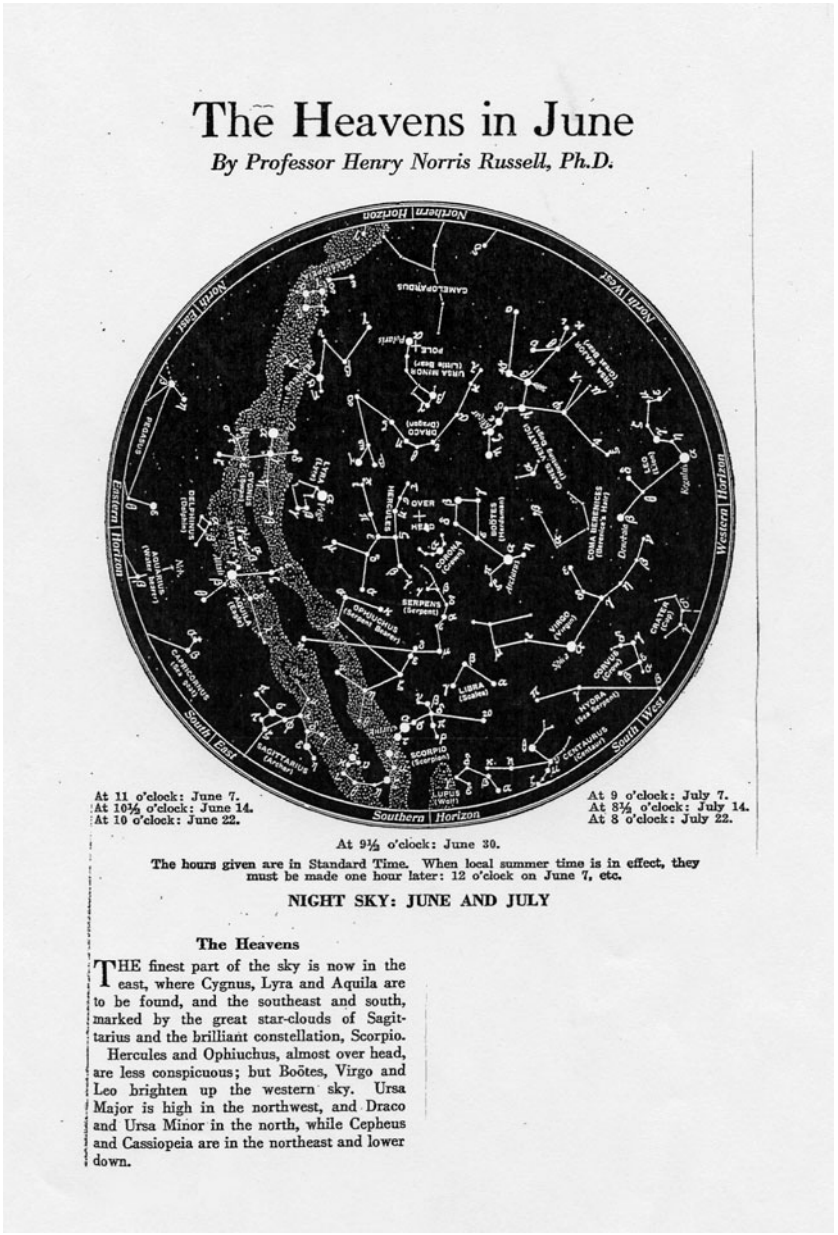
NIGHT SKY: APRIL AND MAY

The Heavens

IN our usual glance at the sky, we find the Great Dipper high in the north, with Draco below and then Ursa Minor and last Cepheus and Cassiopeia close to the horizon. Lyra and Cygnus are rising in the northeast, Ophiuchus in the east and Scorpio in the southeast. Above them are Hercules, Corona and Bootes. Virgo and Leo are high in the south and southwest, with Hydra and Corvus below. Auriga, Gemini and Canis Minor are well down in the western sky and Orion has just set.

Figure 20.1. Henry Norris Russell, "The Heavens in April," *Scientific American,* April 1926.

Lyre or Harp) and Ara (the Altar). According to Greek mythology, the constellation Lyra was the lyre of Orpheus, translated to the stars by either the Muses or Jupiter when Orpheus died. But Orpheus had been, of course, one of the Argonauts and, like Odysseus (seeking the shade of Achilles) or Aeneas (seeking the shade of his father), he had made a descent into the underworld trying to bring back his wife Eurydice from the dead. (Recall in this regard that two other Argonauts, Hercules and Theseus, had also



The Heavens in June

By Professor Henry Norris Russell, Ph.D.

The hours given are in Standard Time. When local summer time is in effect, they must be made one hour later: 12 o'clock on June 7, etc.

NIGHT SKY: JUNE AND JULY

The Heavens

THE finest part of the sky is now in the east, where Cygnus, Lyra and Aquila are to be found, and the southeast and south, marked by the great star-clouds of Sagittarius and the brilliant constellation, Scorpio.

Hercules and Ophiuchus, almost over head, are less conspicuous; but Boötes, Virgo and Leo brighten up the western sky. Ursa Major is high in the northwest, and Draco and Ursa Minor in the north, while Cepheus and Cassiopeia are in the northeast and lower down.

Figure 20.2. Henry Norris Russell, "The Heavens in June," *Scientific American,* June 1926.

made descents to the underworld and returned. As one of his twelve labors, Hercules brought back the triple-headed dog Cerberus that guards the entrance to Hades, and when Hercules "was in Hades he obtained," according to Bulfinch, "the liberty of Theseus . . . who had been detained a prisoner there for an unsuccessful attempt to carry off Proserpine" [121].) Orpheus was also the principal actor in the third of the three adventures that the chorus in Seneca's *Medea* cites in its summary of Jason's voyage—

the Argo's passage of the Sirens, "when the deadly pests soothed the Ausonian sea with their tuneful songs" and, "sounding back on his Pierian lyre, Thracian Orpheus well-nigh forced the Siren to follow, though wont to hold ships spell-bound by her song" (Seneca 1:259).

The other constellation, Ara, was, according to Hyginus's *Fabulae* (a second-century AD Latin compilation of mythological tales pertaining to the stars), "the altar" on which "the gods are thought to have first made offerings and formed an alliance when they were about to oppose the Titans. The Cyclopes made it" (Hyginus 225). The Cyclopes, who were "excellent craftsmen" and "like the gods except that they have one eye each," were "sons of Earth and Heaven. They often appear . . . as Hephaestus' workmen, and often again are credited with making ancient fortifications" (*Oxford* 304). In linking the gigantic structure of Brooklyn Bridge to the starry altar built by the Cyclopes, Crane sets up the background for his image of the Manhattan skyline later in the "Harbor Dawn" section: "From Cyclopean towers across Manhattan waters / —Two—three bright window eyes aglitter, disk / The sun" (39). This Cyclopean imagery is meant to recall in turn the *Aeneid*'s Book 6, where the Cumaean Sibyl tells Aeneas during their underworld journey that the golden bough he has carried down must be left within the gateway of "ramparts reared in Cyclopean forges" (Virgil 1:549–51). That Crane's invocation of the Bridge in relation to Ara (and its Cyclopean origin) and his subsequent image of Manhattan's "Cyclopean towers" allude to those Cyclopean ramparts where Aeneas leaves the golden bough is confirmed by the stanza immediately following in "Harbor Dawn": "Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star— / As though to join us at some distant hill— / Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep" (39). In Book 6, Virgil specifically compares the golden bough to mistletoe: "As in winter's cold, amid the woods, the mistletoe, sown of an alien tree, is wont to bloom with strange leafage, and with yellow fruit embrace the shapely stems: such was the vision of the leafy gold on the shadowy ilex, so rustled the foil in the gentle breeze" (Virgil 1:521). And in Crane's lines the mistletoe image (with its descent-to-the-underworld associations) immediately leads to the image of a star because, of course, in classical mythology the starry night sky was thought to be the dark hemisphere of the underworld rotated upward.

From alluding to constellations named for mythological persons or objects linked to classical texts layered beneath *The Bridge,* Crane moves on to evoke other star groups whose shapes or names fit in with or reinforce the nonclassical structures deployed in the poem. Thus, for example, the imagery of eagle and serpent conjoined, which Crane associates with the environmental and spiritual integration of the Amerindian "nature-world," becomes, with Maquokeeta's translation to the heavens, the image of an eagle and serpent among the stars:

> And when the caribou slant down for salt
> Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine
> Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault
> Of dusk?—And are her perfect brows to thine?

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .
Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
The serpent with the eagle in the boughs (48).

As the Indian chief Maquokeeta has been translated to the "star-triggered . . . vault" of the night sky, so too has the imagery of the Indian hunt. And in the "cobalt desert closures" of the heavens, the serpent and eagle in the last line have likewise been translated into two other constellations, Serpens (the Serpent) and Aquila (the Eagle), seen through the boughs of a tree, much as Lyra and Ara (the Harp and Altar) had been imaginatively sighted through the cables of the bridge in the poem's opening section. (I say "imaginatively sighted" because, since Lyra is a northern constellation and Ara a southern one, both could not have been seen at the same time in the night sky from the latitude of New York City. But "To Brooklyn Bridge" was written on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, in the summer of 1926, and at that latitude both constellations are visible at the same time during summer nights.) The use of the word *brows* in the line "And are her perfect brows to thine?" is clearly meant to evoke a starry locus, the night sky pressing down upon the hilly brow of the land, with the word *brows* echoing back to the line in "Ave Maria" where Columbus invokes the constellation Corona Borealis: "round thy brows unhooded now / —The kindled Crown!" (37).

Moreover, the image of "arrows" that "thirst and leap" evokes two additional constellations in the northern celestial hemisphere—the first one (next to Aquila) is the constellation Sagitta (the Arrow), and the other, farther away, the constellation Sagittarius (the Archer). Once we realize that the final lines of "The Dance" evoke the vanished Amerindian's continued presence in the night sky through his eternal recurrence in these constellations, we are in a better position to interpret Crane's puzzling remark in the Waldo Frank letter about the "angle chart" from the *Scientific American* embodying a complete symbolism of bridge and star, "even including the motif of the 'holy tooth'" (479). In the middle of "The Dance," Crane had imaged the coming of the rainstorm invoked by Maquokeeta's snake dance like this:

And every tendon scurries toward the twangs
Of lightning deltaed down your saber hair.
Now snaps the flint in every tooth; red fangs
And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air . . .

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!
Spark, tooth! (47)

The fiery lightning is evoked here as the striking of a snake whose fang or tooth emits a spark, like flint struck by steel. Of course, the Amerindians' characteristic use of flint was as arrowheads, a "tooth" that thirsts for blood in the hunt, and I would argue that Crane's "motif of the 'holy tooth'" re-

fers to the image of a flint arrowhead implicit in the constellations Sagitta and Sagittarius, an identification made virtually certain by a line in an unfinished Crane poem composed during the writing of *The Bridge* and variously titled "Tenderness and Resolution" (Simon edition) or "Reliquary" (Weber edition): "The harvest laugh of bright Apollo / And the flint tooth of Sagittarius" (136).

Though the constellations Aquila, Serpens, Sagitta, and Sagittarius all have classical myths associated with them, these myths have for the most part nothing to do with the classical texts Crane has layered beneath *The Bridge.* Rather, Crane uses these starry figures of eagle, serpent, arrow, and archer in "The Dance" for the way they fit in with his imagining of Amerindian lore. Yet he also takes advantage of details from classical myths connected with the constellations when these coincide with his own imagery. Thus, though the constellation Aquila was considered by the ancients to be "the eagle . . . said to have snatched Ganymede up and given him to his lover, Jove" (Hyginus 203), the bird was also thought to be the eagle that "brings back the thunderbolts which Jupiter has flung" (Manilius 341), a connection between the starry eagle and lightning bolts that fits "The Dance"'s eagle/serpent imagery for the rainstorm's lightning.

§ 21
Constellations Continued; *Panis Angelicus*

The single largest concentration of Crane's allusions to constellations, as well as of his most explicit statements about the way they manifest the past's eternal recurrence in the present, occurs in "Cape Hatteras." This is not surprising, given that this section takes up the image of Columbus's seagoing voyage of discovery from "Ave Maria" and transmutes it (through a lengthy description of manned flight) into an airborne quest and then into a prophetic vision of interplanetary exploration. "Cape Hatteras" begins with its epigraph's evocation of a sailor returning home, "the seas all crossed, weathered the capes, the voyage done" (the Whitman epigraph emphasizing the closing of the era of discovery by sea voyage), and with Crane's sailor "repeating to the stars / The ancient names" (54), presumably those of constellations. Almost immediately the quester's eyes turn to "that star-glistered salver of infinity, / The circle, blind crucible of endless space, / . . . sluiced by motion,—subjugated never. / Adam and Adam's answer in the forest / Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool. / Now the eagle dominates our days, is jurist / Of the ambiguous cloud" (55). "Adam's answer in the forest" evokes our forefather's original act of naming things as the beginning of that specifically human work of ordering "the forest," of organizing the wilderness of the world's objects—an act like that of calling a particularly bright point of light in the nameless chaos of the sky "Hesperus" (the Evening Star), thereby retrieving it from oblivion and leaving it mirrored forever in the "lucid pool" of the mind.

As "Cape Hatteras" proceeds, Crane balances passages that elaborate

fers to the image of a flint arrowhead implicit in the constellations Sagitta and Sagittarius, an identification made virtually certain by a line in an unfinished Crane poem composed during the writing of *The Bridge* and variously titled "Tenderness and Resolution" (Simon edition) or "Reliquary" (Weber edition): "The harvest laugh of bright Apollo / And the flint tooth of Sagittarius" (136).

Though the constellations Aquila, Serpens, Sagitta, and Sagittarius all have classical myths associated with them, these myths have for the most part nothing to do with the classical texts Crane has layered beneath *The Bridge.* Rather, Crane uses these starry figures of eagle, serpent, arrow, and archer in "The Dance" for the way they fit in with his imagining of Amerindian lore. Yet he also takes advantage of details from classical myths connected with the constellations when these coincide with his own imagery. Thus, though the constellation Aquila was considered by the ancients to be "the eagle . . . said to have snatched Ganymede up and given him to his lover, Jove" (Hyginus 203), the bird was also thought to be the eagle that "brings back the thunderbolts which Jupiter has flung" (Manilius 341), a connection between the starry eagle and lightning bolts that fits "The Dance"'s eagle/serpent imagery for the rainstorm's lightning.

§ 21
Constellations Continued; *Panis Angelicus*

The single largest concentration of Crane's allusions to constellations, as well as of his most explicit statements about the way they manifest the past's eternal recurrence in the present, occurs in "Cape Hatteras." This is not surprising, given that this section takes up the image of Columbus's seagoing voyage of discovery from "Ave Maria" and transmutes it (through a lengthy description of manned flight) into an airborne quest and then into a prophetic vision of interplanetary exploration. "Cape Hatteras" begins with its epigraph's evocation of a sailor returning home, "the seas all crossed, weathered the capes, the voyage done" (the Whitman epigraph emphasizing the closing of the era of discovery by sea voyage), and with Crane's sailor "repeating to the stars / The ancient names" (54), presumably those of constellations. Almost immediately the quester's eyes turn to "that star-glistered salver of infinity, / The circle, blind crucible of endless space, / . . . sluiced by motion,—subjugated never. / Adam and Adam's answer in the forest / Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool. / Now the eagle dominates our days, is jurist / Of the ambiguous cloud" (55). "Adam's answer in the forest" evokes our forefather's original act of naming things as the beginning of that specifically human work of ordering "the forest," of organizing the wilderness of the world's objects—an act like that of calling a particularly bright point of light in the nameless chaos of the sky "Hesperus" (the Evening Star), thereby retrieving it from oblivion and leaving it mirrored forever in the "lucid pool" of the mind.

As "Cape Hatteras" proceeds, Crane balances passages that elaborate

the figure of Walt Whitman (passages that echo lines from Whitman's poems expressing his optimism in the future of America) against passages describing some of the more dangerous aspects of America's "progress" in the twentieth century. Thus, after a group of lines in which he alludes to Whitman's "Recorders Ages Hence" from "Calamus," to "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" from *Sea-Drift,* and to the ending of *Song of Myself,* Crane launches into a maniacal description of an electric power plant and dynamo meant to evoke the "new universe" of mechanical power and then moves on to a description of the beginnings of manned flight with the Wright brothers, a description that starts with a reference to the stars:

> Stars scribble on our eyes the frosty sagas,
> The gleaming cantos of unvanquished space . . .
> O sinewy silver biplane, nudging the wind's withers!
> There, from Kill Devils Hill at Kitty Hawk
> Two brothers in their twinship left the dune;
> Warping the gale, the Wright windwrestlers veered
> Capeward, then blading the wind's flank, banked and spun
> What ciphers risen from prophetic script,
> What marathons new-set between the stars! (56)

Clearly, "the frosty sagas" the stars "scribble on our eyes" refers to that wealth of mythological lore evoked by and contained in the names of constellations, and once the Wright brothers' first plane is launched into the skies, Crane immediately associates them with two crew members from the voyage of the first ship. As we noted earlier, the Wright brothers were not twins, but Crane's hailing them as "two brothers in their twinship" links these brothers in the sky to twin brothers in the stars—the constellation Gemini (the Twins), the Argonauts Castor and Pollux. Interestingly enough, the Latin poet Manilius in his astronomical/astrological poem *Astronomica* of the first century AD says that the constellation Gemini influences "varied song . . . and the words fitted thereto" and that the Twins favor those who "discover paths to the skies, complete a survey of the heavens with numbers and measurements, and outstrip the flight of stars" (235). Crane's allusion to these starry twins echoes that moment in "Indiana" when the pioneer mother on her way back from Colorado passes an Indian squaw whose eyes are like "twin stars" as they each hold up their infant child for the other to see, children of different races but twinned in their deracination from the American landscape—an echo perhaps meant to link the son Larry, who can't live on land and runs away to sea, to the two brothers who first leave the land for the air.

With the beginning of manned flight, "the soul," says Crane, "already knows the closer clasp of Mars" (56), with a turn on the name of the planet and the Roman god of war, for Crane understands air travel as the first step toward voyaging in outer space, but he also knows that one of the first uses, and major driving forces in the development, of airplanes was aerial combat in World War I, a recurrence of war and pillage like that caused by the first ship's voyage: "Behold the dragon's covey—amphibian,

ubiquitous / To hedge the seaboard, wrap the headland, ride / The blue's cloud-templed districts unto ether . . . / While Iliads glimmer through eyes raised in pride / Hell's belt springs wider into heaven's plumed side" (56). The image of the fighter planes as "the dragon's covey" is a dual allusion—on the one hand to Jason's quest for the golden fleece and on the other to the constellation Draco (the Dragon). When Jason comes to Colchis to reclaim the fleece, Aetes, the Colchian king, agrees to give it up if Jason performs two tasks: "yoke to the plough two fire-breathing bulls with brazen feet, and sow the teeth of the dragon which Cadmus had slain, and from which it was well known that a crop of armed men would spring up, who would turn their weapons against their producer" (Bulfinch 108). The image of a peaceful activity (like sowing a field) turning into a war-like action in which a covey of armed men wield their weapons "against their producer" must have seemed to Crane an apt classical prefiguration of the newly invented airplane's swift change from a vehicle for peaceful pursuits such as travel and exploration into an instrument of war. But even after Jason accomplishes these two tasks with the help of Medea's magic, he still has "to lull to sleep the dragon that guarded the fleece . . . by scattering over him a few drops of a preparation which Medea had supplied" (Bulfinch 109).

The ancients usually identified the constellation Draco with the dragon that guarded the tree of golden apples which Earth had given Juno at her marriage (Manilius xxvi), a tree located in the "garden of the Hesperides . . . beyond the Atlas mountains at the western border of the Ocean" (*Oxford* 511). The tree was also watched over by the Hesperides, the daughters of Atlas and Hesperis, and thus the granddaughters of that same Hesperus (the Evening Star) that Crane had invoked earlier in "Cape Hatteras" (*Oxford* 511, Hesperus entry). As one of his twelve labors, Hercules steals the golden apples after killing the dragon guarding them. It would have been, then, an easy step for Crane to associate Jason's slaying the armed men sown from a dragon's teeth in order to steal the dragon-guarded golden fleece to Hercules's slaying of a dragon to steal the golden apples—an easy linkage given that Hercules had been one of Jason's Argonauts and that a conjunction of the two stories associates the images of gold and plunder.

In the next lines of "Cape Hatteras," Crane moves from alluding to constellations to explicitly naming them. He describes the fighter planes as being

> fledged as the Pleiades
> With razor sheen they zoom each rapid helix! . . .
> While Cetus-like, O thou Dirigible, enormous Lounger
> Of pendulous auroral beaches,—satellited wide
> By convoy planes, moonferrets that rejoin thee
> On fleeing balconies as thou dost glide,
> —Hast splintered space! (57)

The Pleiades is a group of seven stars located within the larger constellation Taurus (the Bull). Identifying the Pleaides as seven sisters, an-

cient mythology explained that "Atlas by Pleione or an Oceanid had twelve daughters and a son, Hyas. The son was killed by a wild boar or a lion, and the sisters, grieving for him, died of this grief. Five of them first put among the stars have their place between the horns of the bull . . . and are called from their brother's name, Hyades [the same "rainy Hyades" that the chorus in *Medea* invoked as an example of a constellation used by mariners to predict the weather]. The rest of the sisters, later dying from grief, were made stars, and, because they were many, were called Pleiades" (Hyginus 148). One of the seven sisters, Electra, was the mother by Jove of Dardanus, the founder of the Trojan line. Though there are seven stars in the Pleiades, one is so faint as hardly to be seen, explained in one mythological version as the result of Electra's disappearance "because . . . after Troy was captured and her descendants through Dardanus overthrown, moved by grief she left them" (Hyginus 211).

This connection to the Trojan War links Crane's image of the fighter planes, which are "fledged as the Pleiades," back to his initial evocation of air combat, where "Iliads glimmer through eyes raised in pride." Crane makes a further oblique reference to Dardanus and the Trojan War in the closing "Atlantis" section when he apostrophizes the bridge as the "palladium helm of stars" (72), the Palladium being the "ancient sacred image of Pallas (Athena), said to have been sent down from heaven by Zeus to Dardanus, the founder of Troy," the "protection of the city" depending "on its safe custody." Greek myth held that "Diomede and Odysseus . . . carried off the Palladium and thus made possible the sack of Troy," but "the more common Roman tradition was that the Palladium was rescued from the fires of Troy by Aeneas, who brought it to Italy, where it was ultimately placed in the *penus Vestae* as a pledge of the safety of Rome" (*Oxford* 771).

In hailing the bridge as the "palladium helm of stars," Crane is not only evoking the bridge as a symbolic national object whose safe custody will insure the continued well-being of America, he is also making a turn on two meanings of the word *helm*—a helmet and the tiller or wheel of a ship. The "palladium helm of stars" refers, then, on the one hand to the sacred image of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war who was traditionally represented by the Greeks as wearing a helmet covered with stars, and, on the other hand (in the context of Crane's imaging the bridge as a ship at several points in "Atlantis"), to the setting of a ship's direction (the manipulation of its helm) by using the constellations as guides. In this latter sense, the word *palladium* takes on its other, chemical meaning—the rare silver-white element of the platinum group—a meaning that evokes the image of the bridge seen in moonlight as its "White tempest nets file upward, upward ring / With silver terraces the humming spars, / The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars" (72).

In his description of air combat Crane compares a dirigible to the constellation Cetus (the Whale), but the allusion Crane intends here is not to the star group's classical associations (the ancients thought of Cetus as the sea monster that threatened Andromeda and that Perseus killed) but rather to his own earlier use of Melville's *Moby-Dick* as a background

text to "Cutty Sark," with the final words of the dirigible passage ("enormous Lounger / Of pendulous auroral beaches . . . Hast splintered space!") pointing forward to the passage in "Atlantis" about the Argo's stern being clipped by the Symplegades ("Jason! hesting Shout! . . . Beams yelling Aeolus! splintered in the straits!" [73]).

When his lengthy description of air combat ends, Crane turns back to his elaboration of the figure of Walt Whitman. From having been evoked at the start of "Cape Hatteras" as the quester's elder brother, Whitman becomes progressively identified with the American landscape, taking on first the character of a nature deity and then some of the specific associations of a classical psychopomp. But this transformation of Whitman is introduced through a sidereal image:

> The stars have grooved our eyes with old persuasions
> Of love and hatred, birth,—surcease of nations . . .
> But who has held the heights more sure than thou,
> O Walt!—Ascensions of thee hover in me now
> As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed
> With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!
> The competent loam, the probable grass . . .
> O, upward from the dead
> Thou bringest tally, and a pact, new bound
> Of living brotherhood! (58)

Though Whitman's great symbol, the grass, is evoked here as a symbol of natural resurrection, Crane in applying the term "ascensions" to Whitman also associates the poet with the Christian God-made-man. However, the type of "ascensions" said to "hover in" the quester are those created by reading Whitman's poems and feeling the dead poet's spirit come alive again in the living reader.

The passage that immediately precedes Whitman's ascension—the fighter plane's crash on Cape Hatteras—clearly functions as a modern, mechanized version of Maquokeeta's descent in a rainstorm to inseminate the land in "The Dance." The fighter pilot is warned, "see / How from thy path above the levin's lance / Thou sowest doom thou hast nor time nor chance / To reckon" (57). Whitman's ascension, to which this episode leads, would, then, structurally correspond to Maquokeeta's stellar translation, and indeed, Crane imagines Whitman's spirit as literally ascending to the stars, acting as a kind of Hermes-like guide to the quester: "Thou, there beyond— / Glacial sierras and the flight of ravens, / Hermetically past condor zones, through zenith havens / Past where the albatross has offered up / His last wing-pulse, and downcast as a cup / That's drained, is shivered back to earth—thy wand / Has beat a song, O Walt,—there and beyond!" (58). Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, was Zeus's messenger, as well as being the conductor or guide of souls to and from the underworld. (It was Hermes, for example, who, at Zeus's command, first brought Persephone back from Hades to her mother Demeter.) He was traditionally represented by the Greeks as wearing "a winged cap and winged shoes" and

bearing "in his hand" a rod or wand "entwined with two serpents" (Bulfinch 12). Given that Whitman's spirit in leading the quester imaginatively upward is figured as soaring "hermetically" through the sky, it seems likely that the image of Hermes's "magic wand, the Caduceus" (Hamilton 33), lies behind Crane's image of Whitman's "wand" that "beat a song," particularly given Hermes' connection with song as the inventor of the lyre.

In Crane's evocation of Whitman's spirit soaring beyond the flight of birds (specifically, ravens, condor, and albatross), the reader is suddenly jarred by the seemingly extraneous image of the albatross reaching the limit of its altitude where "downcast as a cup / That's drained," it is "shivered back to earth." But the cup image becomes immediately understandable once one realizes that the allusion here is to the constellation Crater (the Cup), the image, in effect, evoking the stars as a limit to the bird's flight but not to Whitman's spiritual ascension, which reaches "there and beyond." That the cup image refers to Crater is confirmed by the fact that the first type of bird Crane mentions in this passage is a raven, and the constellation most closely associated with Crater in the night sky is Corvus (the Raven). The ancients saw these two small constellations as resting on the back of the large constellation Hydra (the Water Snake), this latter being identified either as the hydra of Lerna (killed by Hercules) or as the dragon that guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides (also killed by Hercules) (Manilius 301).

In his *Fasti,* Ovid records a charming tale giving the reason these "three constellations are grouped together—the Raven, the Snake, and the Bowl" (75). Phoebus Apollo was "preparing a solemn feast for Jupiter" (75), and the raven, "being sent with a cup for water, loitered at a fig-tree till the fruit became ripe, and then returned to the god with a water-snake in his claws and a lie in his mouth, alleging the snake to have been the cause of his delay. In punishment he was forever fixed in the sky with the Cup and the Snake; and, we may infer, doomed to everlasting thirst by the guardianship of the Hydra over the Cup and its contents" (Allen 180). Crane's interest in these three associated constellations would have been piqued by their representing another example (besides the constellations Aquila and Serpens) of an ancient linking of the images of bird and serpent. Also, as R. H. Allen points out in *Star Names* (1899), the Romans identified Crater as the cup of, variously, "Hercules, . . . Dido, . . . and Medea; its association with this last bringing it into the long list of Argonautic constellations" (Allen 183)—another reason for Crane's alluding to the starry Cup. A further resonance to Crane's mentioning "ravens" in his description of Whitman's ascension is, of course, that in "The Tunnel" the quester imaginatively confronts the author of "The Raven" as a cautionary example of his own possible fate and that consequently the quester's characterizing Whitman's ascension as being "there beyond . . . the flight of ravens" may well indicate Crane's sense of the extent to which Whitman's poetic achievement exceeded Poe's.

As Crane continues his elaboration of Whitman's persona in "Cape Hatteras," the older poet's Christic associations (evoked by Crane's use of the word *ascensions*) become more explicit, with Crane addressing Whit-

man three times within some thirty lines as "*Panis Angelicus*." The title of a Latin hymn whose best-known musical setting is by the nineteenth-century French composer César Franck, *Panis Angelicus* is often sung at Communion in the Catholic Mass, its words taken from the last two stanzas of the hymn *Sacris solemnis* written by Thomas Aquinas:

Panis angelicus fit panis hominum;
Dat panis coelicus figuris terminum:
O res mirabilis! Manducat Dominum
Pauper, pauper, servus et humilis.

Te, trina Deitas unaque, poscimus,
Sic nos tu visita, sicut te colimus;
Per tuas semitas duc nos quo tendimus,
Ad lucem quam inhabitas.

* * *

The bread of angels becomes the bread of man;
the bread of heaven is given a bounded form.
O miraculous thing! The poor, the slave,
and the humble man feed on their lord.

Of you, threefold and one God, we ask:
Come to visit us as we worship you;
lead us on your paths to where we want to go:
to the light in which you dwell.

The movement of the figure of Whitman during the course of "Cape Hatteras" from being the poetic quester's elder brother (Crane's poetic precursor), to a sort of American nature deity, then to a Hermes-like pyschopomp to a world beyond, and, finally, to his being evoked in terms of the Christian God-become-man is simply the culmination of Crane's reworking of that structure of Plutarchean parallel lives depicted on the side walls of the Sistine Chapel, a parallelism that associates Columbus with Moses, and Whitman with Jesus.

While the reason seems clear enough for Crane invoking Whitman's spirit in terms that compare the poet to Jesus, we can only speculate about the chain of associations that led Crane to choose the phrase *Panis Angelicus* as the specific Christic appellation. We know from Crane's correspondence that he appreciated classical music and would have been aware of Franck's work and of his renown as a teacher of musical composition whose students and protégés (e.g., D'Indy and Chausson) referred to him affectionately as "Pater Seraphicus" (seraphic or angelic father). Since Crane had read Goethe's *Faust,* he would have certainly recognized the name "Pater Seraphicus" as that of the "holy anchorite" from the last scene of Goethe's poem who instructs the chorus of Blesséd Boys conducting Faust's "immortal part" upward through the regions of heaven.

The associative steps would run like this: Just as Whitman is invoked as the quester's instructor in the art of poetry ("thy wand / Has beat a song, O Walt"), so Franck was the teacher and mentor of several famous musi-

cians, and just as Franck was called "Pater Seraphicus" by those pupils, an appellation that evoked him as the guide to a higher world (like the "holy anchorite" in Goethe's poem), so Crane, borrowing a phrase from Franck's famous Eucharistic hymn, evokes Whitman as his guide to a higher world of poetic song, completing the associative circuit from Pater Seraphicus to Panis Angelicus, from angelic father to angelic bread. And just to make clear the context of nineteenth-century song and musicianship within which Crane makes this Franckian allusion, Crane makes a further, Wagnerian one a few lines later by calling the author of *Song of Myself* "our Meistersinger" (59), Wagner and Lizst having been, of course, the two most important contemporary influences on Franck's music.

Crane's most explicit and repeated references to a single constellation come in the very next section of *The Bridge* with the first of the "Three Songs." Each short lyric in the "Three Songs" section evokes, as we saw, a modern version of one aspect of the triple female archetype. "Southern Cross," focusing on the figure of mother Eve, is set on a Caribbean sea voyage whose imagery and tone doubtless owe much to Crane's own 150-mile, nightmarish journey on a schooner from Cuba to Grand Cayman Island in June 1926. (Crane began writing "Southern Cross" in August 1926.) The schooner was crowded, as Crane wrote Waldo Frank on June 19, 1926, with "thirty-five cackling, puking, farting negroes (women and children first)" (463), and to judge from the poem these mothers and children left Crane with the sense, on the one hand, of the fecundity of the southern female and, on the other, of the ultimate pointlessness of a procreation that begets endless generations of further procreation, a sense that the blind instinct to reproduce by the millions or hundreds of millions evaporates the meaning and value of any individual life. Though Crane's sea journey to Grand Cayman had been an agonizing experience, taking twice as long as planned and being fraught with physical discomforts, still, as Crane biographer Paul Mariani argues, "it made him feel closer to what he imagined Columbus's crew . . . must have felt as they crossed the Atlantic in boats not much larger or better outfitted than the one he was on" (222).

Since the poem's setting is a Caribbean sea voyage, one is not surprised when the quester, in the manner of Columbus sighting the Corona Borealis, says of the rising of the eponymous constellation, "the Southern Cross takes night / And lifts her girdles from her one by one— / High, cool, / and wide from the smouldering fire / Of lower heavens," adding later, "The embers of the Cross / Climbed by aslant" (61). The poem ends with an evocation of Eve as a promiscuous mother figure, "docile, alas, from many arms": "Eve—wraith of my unloved seed! / The Cross, a phantom, buckled—dropped below the dawn. / Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn" (62). The Southern Cross (a constellation of four stars, two of the first magnitude), located in the southern celestial hemisphere near the constellations Vela (the Sails, one of the component constellations of Argo Navis) and Centaur, is a star group with Christian rather than ancient mythological associations, and Crane's purpose in having the quester sight it during his voyage is to contrast his situation in the twentieth century

with Columbus's in the fifteenth. For Columbus, still able to see God in the starry heavens, the figures of mother and virgin were still powerful and efficacious as he prayed, "O Madre Maria, still / One ship of these thou grantest safe returning; / Assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue!" (35–36). But the quester sees the Cross (and presumably all that it represents in terms of a Christian view of the value and meaning of life and a moral order in the universe) vanish in the light of day, nor can he find spiritual comfort or efficacy in a mother archetype he addresses as "O simian Venus, homeless Eve, / Unwedded, stumbling gardenless to grieve / . . . Finally to answer all within one grave!" (61).

Crane's final references to constellations come in the concluding "Atlantis" section. At one point he hails Pons Brooklyniensis: "Of stars thou art the stitch and stallion glow" (73), and, clearly, the glowing stallion among the stars to which Crane likens the bridge (as well as his eponymous poem) is the constellation Pegasus, the winged horse associated with poetry. "Mythologically . . . the son of Neptune and Medusa," Pegasus "was snowy white in color, and the favorite of the Muses, for he had caused to flow their fountain Pirene on Helicon,—or Hippocrene on the Acrocorinthus,—whence came one of the constellation's titles, Fontis Musarum Inventor" (Allen 321), the myth being that "the fountain Hippocrene, on the Muses' mountain Helicon, was opened by a kick from his hoof" (Bulfinch 103).

One can appreciate how important a structural element in *The Bridge* Crane's repeated allusions to constellations had become when one notes that at his epic's end (the point of greatest formal significance) the imagery of the stars predominates and that the two constellations from the close of "The Dance" return to form *The Bridge*'s final image:

> So to thine Everpresence beyond time,
> Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star
> That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings,
> Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:
> —One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,
> Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
> The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?
> Whispers antiphonal in azure swing. (74)

The idealized bridge's hoped-for eternity ("thine Everpresence beyond time") is evoked first in relation to the eternal recurrence of "one tolling star" (probably the Morning Star), and then the bridge's cables dotted with electric lights, its "orphic strings," are imaged as "sidereal phalanxes," similar to Lyra, Orpheus's starry lyre. The poem then closes with the two constellations, Serpens and Aquila, seen now through "the leaves" of a tree rather than through its "boughs" as at the end of "The Dance." (The "leaves" evoked here are probably also those of a book, as the Brooklyn Bridge becomes the poem *The Bridge,* the trope of the leaves resonating in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*—hence the image of the grass in the line immediately preceding the image of serpent and eagle—and in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind.")

Moreover, we can see that the poem's final line is, in effect, a self-conscious evocation of Crane's strategy throughout the poem of alluding to constellations in order to attach their mythological or imagistic associations to *The Bridge*'s themes and thus evoke its background quest narratives—the constellations being eternally recurring "antiphonal" responses in the "azure" of the heavens to those texts buried beneath Crane's poem like ancient towns beneath modern cities. As we said earlier, Crane's use of classical texts in this way was influenced by, and constituted a further development of, what Eliot in his 1923 essay "*Ulysses,* Order, and Myth," called "the mythical method" in commenting on Joyce's "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" in *Ulysses* as "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Noting that this method had already been "adumbrated by Mr. Yeats" who was, Eliot felt, "the first contemporary to be conscious" of the need for it, Eliot says that "psychology . . . , ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible" the mythical method as an alternative to the older "narrative method" (*Selected Prose* 177–78). But, as at least one critic has pointed out, another influence that probably suggested to Joyce the idea of layering the *Odyssey* beneath the events of one day in 1904 Dublin was the startling finds produced by a series of late nineteenth-century archaeological excavations, most notably those of Heinrich Schliemann during the 1870s at the site of ancient Troy and of Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos on Crete, finds that made real the sense of an ancient, almost mythical past still present beneath our feet, just as the ancient star groups in the night sky left modern man, like the returning sailor in "Cape Hatteras," constantly "repeating to the stars / The ancient names" (54).

What we should also note as regards Crane's use of the mythical method is that while Crane felt Eliot employed this "continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" negatively in order to evoke by comparison the modern world's "immense panorama of futility and anarchy," Crane intended (as he said in a 1923 letter to Gorham Munson) to use Eliot's "erudition and technique . . . toward a more positive . . . goal" than that which Crane associated with *The Waste Land*'s "perfection of death" (308). Though Crane's layering of ancient structures and images (e.g., the quest voyage, the sacred marriage, the descent to the underworld, the triple female archetype, the bird-serpent as a symbol of the conjunction of opposites, the mythological component of the constellations) beneath his modern narrative would occasionally result (as with the figure of the farm mother in "Indiana" or the female figures distributed among the "Three Songs") in exhibiting the modern decline of these structures, Crane considered that such a negative demonstration still served a positive purpose. For even though the modern examples might be buried beneath the weight of materialism and dramatically reduced in power, the very fact of their having any presence at all in the modern world demonstrated the possibility that they could be recovered, like that "depth of red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas" buried beneath "derricks, tunnels, chimneys"—the only good

that "time has really pledged us." Moreover, by as much as these ancient structures and archetypes seemed to be something inherent in the human psyche, they were transpersonal; they were continually recurring elements in the narrative of the human spirit, and as such Crane's layering them beneath his poem would have given him access to original power, to that paternal authority that was past, passing, and to come.[1]

§ 22
Time and Eternity; Temporal Narrative and Spatial Configuration; the Bridge as Memory Place; "Atlantis"; One Arc Synoptic of All Times

In understanding Crane's ongoing use of the imagery of the eternal stars, we have a hint to interpreting the kind of final vision the quester is granted in "Atlantis" upon emerging from the underworld of "The Tunnel." For what Crane saw as the relationship between classical mythology and the ancient practice of naming constellations after mythic persons or objects was a structure in which a *temporal* narrative (a myth) was reduced to, was emblematized by, a visual image, a *spatial* (i.e., two-dimensional, geometrical) pattern imposed on groups of stars. And further, he saw how this structure of moving from a temporal to a spatial form, from the step-by-step unfolding of a verbal narrative to the instantaneous (and thus simultaneous) presentation of all the elements in a visual image, could be used in the final vision of "Atlantis" to evoke the movement from time to eternity, to evoke the past's "Everpresence beyond time." Of course, in "Atlantis" the quester confronts an architectural structure that quite literally exhibits the past's ongoing presence in the twentieth century: the Gothic arches of its two massive stone towers evoking the buildings of the Middle Ages and the structure's steel cables (forged from the new metal whose strength made suspension bridges and skyscrapers possible) representing the buildings of the modern world. But even beyond this the reader is made to confront in "Atlantis" not only imagery taken from the past but also an ancient method of arraying this imagery within (of placing these individual images upon) specific parts of the bridge's physical structure, which is to say, a method resembling the mnemotechnic practice of classical rhetoric. In "Atlantis" Crane turns the Brooklyn Bridge, in effect, into a national "memory place."

As we noted earlier, our best guide to the ancient technique of artificial memory is Frances Yates's *The Art of Memory* (1966), an examination of the memory training that was part of a classical orator's education in rhetoric, as that education was outlined in works by Cicero (*De oratore*), Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*), and the anonymous author of the rhetoric textbook *Ad Herennium*. As the last of these authors points out, there are "five parts of rhetoric (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntatio*)," and memory is "the treasure-house of inventions, the custodian of all the parts of rhetoric." There are two kinds of memory: the natural, "which is

that "time has really pledged us." Moreover, by as much as these ancient structures and archetypes seemed to be something inherent in the human psyche, they were transpersonal; they were continually recurring elements in the narrative of the human spirit, and as such Crane's layering them beneath his poem would have given him access to original power, to that paternal authority that was past, passing, and to come.[1]

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engrafted in our minds, born simultaneously with thought," and the artificial, "a memory strengthened or confirmed by training," that would enable an orator "to deliver long speeches from memory with unfailing accuracy" (Yates, *Art* 5, 2).

The memory training of Roman rhetors involved a system of "*places* and *images* (*loci* and *imagines*)," with "the commonest" method of imprinting on "the memory a series of *loci* or places" being "the architectural" one (2, 3). As Quintilian, who criticized this method, describes it, "a building is to be remembered, as spacious and varied a one as possible, the forecourt, the living room, bedrooms, and parlours . . . The images by which the speech is to be remembered . . . are then placed in imagination on the places which have been memorised in the building" (Yates, *Art* 3). Yates says, "We have to think of the ancient orator as moving in imagination through his memory building *whilst* he is making his speech, drawing from the memorised places the images he has placed on them. The method ensures that the points are remembered in the right order, since the order is fixed by the sequence of places in the building" (3). Quintilian continues, "What I have spoken of as being done in a house can also be done in public buildings, or on a long journey, or in going through a city, or with pictures . . . We require therefore places, either real or imaginary, and images or simulacra which must be invented" (Yates, *Art* 22–23). Quintilian then quotes Cicero that "places . . . must be well-lighted, clearly set out in order, at moderate intervals apart" and that the "images" must be "active, . . . sharply defined, unusual, and . . . have the power of speedily encountering and penetrating the mind" (Yates, *Art* 23). This language of "well-lighted" places and "sharply defined" images assumes that sight is the most powerful of the senses for leaving a lasting impression on the memory.

In citing examples of orators with extraordinary memories, both Cicero and Quintilian mention Metrodorus of Scepsis, a rhetor whose system of memory places was based not on a building but on the zodiac, "the twelve signs through which the sun moves" (Yates, *Art* 23), that is, the sun's apparent path through the heavens during the course of the year as measured against the positions of twelve constellations. As Yates explains, "Metrodorus used the astrological images as places which would assure order in memory, . . . the signs Aries, Taurus, Gemini and so on" giving "at once an easily memorised" sequence (40).

As Yates traces the survival of the classical art of memory from ancient Greece and Rome, through later antiquity and the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance, she raises the question, as we noted earlier, of whether in the Christian era the architectural structure most suited to serve as a memory place was a church:

> The high Gothic cathedral, so E. Panofsky has suggested, resembles a scholastic summa in being arranged according to "a system of homologous parts and parts of parts." The extraordinary thought now arises that if Thomas Aquinas memorised his own *Summa* through "corporeal similitudes" disposed on places following the order of parts, the abstract *Summa* might be corporealised in

> memory into something like a Gothic cathedral full of images on its ordered places . . . It remains an undoubted fact that the *Summa* contained, in an unnoticed part of it, justification and encouragement for the use of imagery, and the creation of new imagery, in its recommendation of artificial memory. (Yates, *Art* 79)

Medieval churches were, of course, preeminently "memory places." From their geographic orientation to their cruciform shape, from the interior disposition of chapels, altars, statues, paintings, and the sequential pathway of the Stations of the Cross around the building's perimeter, churches were understood to be, were fashioned as, gathering places for the principal images of Christianity—particularly so for the illiterate who had to glean their knowledge of the faith either from vocal instruction or visual images.

However, as the art of memory moved from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, the zodiacal method for a memory-place system persisted in the tradition. As Yates notes, "in Johannes Romberch, a German, and Cosmas Rosselius, a Florentine, we have two Dominicans" in the sixteenth century who were "influential memory teachers . . . frequently quoted" (*Art* 114). Among the types of place systems Romberch listed were "the signs of the zodiac as giving an easily memorised order of places," with Metrodorus of Scepsis being cited as the authority on this. Romberch adds that, "if a more extended star-order for memory is needed, it is useful to turn to the images given by Hyginus of all the constellations of the sky" (Yates, *Art* 116). Further, Rosselius also envisions "the constellations as memory place systems, of course mentioning the name of Metrodorus of Scepsis" in this connection (Yates, *Art* 122).

Yates goes on to trace the art of artificial memory through the memory theater of Giulio Camillo in the sixteenth century, when the art became firmly linked to the Hermetic-Cabalistic tradition and as such was endlessly elaborated in works by Giordano Bruno and Robert Fludd, to name only two of the most prominent authors Yates discusses. Camillo, Bruno, and Fludd, as Yates points out, all had zodiacal and/or astral components in their memory systems. Finally, Yates's work points us toward answering the question of how Crane learned of the classical art of artificial memory. She notes that the classical art of memory places and images is mentioned in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetrie,* which we know Crane had read, as well as being described in Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* and *Novum Organum* and mentioned in works by Descartes and Leibniz (Yates, *Art* 284, 370–71, 373, 381). Further, because the art of memory places and images (and particularly, zodiacal or astral ones) had become so much a part of the Hermetic-Cabalistic tradition, we can speculate, given Crane's exposure to various twentieth-century brands of mysticism, that he may well have been aware of a mystical system of zodiacal memory place. His friends Gorham Munson and Jean Toomer were disciples of the Russian mystic G. I. Gurdieff and tried unsuccessfully to interest Crane in becoming one too, and we know that Crane read and was deeply impressed by another Russian mystic's book, P. D. Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum,* a book

that would have acquainted him with other related works such as R. M. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* and the writings of Edward Carpenter. Bucke and Carpenter make a point in their works of claiming Walt Whitman as a mystical poet.

Looking again at Quintilian, we can see that the types of memory places favored by classical rhetoric as venues for easily remembered sequential pathways were "houses," "public buildings," a path "through a city," "a long journey," or "pictures." To which one could add, on the authority of Metrodorus of Scepsis, the sun's apparent annual path through the twelve constellations of the zodiac and, in the Middle Ages, the Gothic cathedral. One cannot help but be struck by the relevance of several of these to *The Bridge.* First, a "church" and "pictures" recalls Crane's statement about the Sistine Chapel's paintings being an analogue of the interrelationship of the poem's sections (Crane 554–55), an association with a church that would have been physically reinforced by the Bridge's Gothic arches and poetically reinforced by Crane's imaging the structure as an *altar* in stanza 8 of "To Brooklyn Bridge."

A second type of memory place that seems particularly appropriate to a structure tolerating no deviation from one's course as it links two boroughs of a metropolis is that of an ordered pathway through a city. Recall in this regard that, in a 1927 letter to Yvor Winters, Crane pointed out how much the "Atlantis" section depended on one's "familiarity with the unique architecture of Brooklyn Bridge . . . I may have to ask all willing readers to take a walk across same to get the marvellous feeling the webbed cables give (as one advances) of a simultaneous forward and upward motion" (539). And, given Crane's use of constellations in the poem, the final type of memory place is, obviously, the zodiac (its twelve constellations perhaps being one significance of "Atlantis" having twelve stanzas), the zodiac that Columbus evokes in "Ave Maria" as "this crescent ring / Sun-cusped and zoned with modulated fire" (36).

At the end of "The Tunnel," the quester emerges from the subway in Brooklyn, having completed his dark night of the soul during the underground journey. Standing at "midnight on the piers . . . by the River that is East," he says, "Here at the waters' edge the hands drop memory" (70), a detail recalling that moment in the underworld when Aeneas sees the crowd of souls "to whom second bodies are owed by Fate" (Virgil 1:555), souls who must drink from "the river of Lethe," the river of forgetfulness, so that "reft of memory, they may revisit the vault above and conceive desire to return again to the body" (1:559). As we noted, this allusion just before the start of "Atlantis" is intended to link the vision of America's future given there to the vision of Rome's future that Aeneas is given by his father Anchises in the underworld.

The "Atlantis" section starts with an epigraph from Plato's *Symposium*: "*Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system.*" Part of the appropriateness of the Platonic epigraph is, of course, that it was Plato who told the story of Atlantis in his dialogues the *Critias* and *Timaeus.* However, the epigraph is not taken from either of these but from

his great dialogue on love, where it is spoken by the physician Eryximachus in maintaining that medicine and music are among several arts "under the sole direction of the god of love" (Plato 540). Eryximachus explains that this is probably what Heraclitus was alluding to in his "cryptic pronouncement": "The one in conflict with itself is held together, like the harmony of the bow and of the lyre" (Plato 540). And Eryximachus concludes his discussion with the sentence cited in the epigraph, a sentence that brings together the images of love, music (song, poetry), and harmony within the context of Platonic idealism. As we noted earlier, a veiled reference to Platonic idealism had been present in *The Bridge* since the very first section, where the image of "cinemas" as a form of false vision was meant to recall Plato's allegory of the cave. And later, the linking of idealism with art was made explicit in one of the epigraphs to the "Quaker Hill" section ("*I see only the ideal. But no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth.*—Isadora Duncan"). Crane's choice of a Platonic epigraph for the "Atlantis" section may also have been influenced, if not suggested, by a line from his favorite American philosopher, Emerson, who in *Representative Men* (1850) praised Plato's "strong solving sense to reconcile his poetry with the appearances of the world, and build a bridge from the streets of cities to the Atlantis" (Emerson 4:61).

"Atlantis"'s epigraph sets the scene, then, for the quester's looking back at the real bridge as he stands at "midnight on the piers" in Brooklyn and his transforming that physical structure, through the imaginative power of poetic song, into an idealized vision of bridgeship, the love-created, love-driven linking and harmonizing of all things, and also, more specifically, into an idealized vision of America's future as the land bridge between East and West (reclaiming Whitman's vision in "Passage to India") and between past and present, a vision that harmonizes American myth and history and that holds out the prospect of an ultimate marriage of Western science and Eastern wisdom on the American continent. That transformation of the real into the visionary ideal begins in "Atlantis"'s first stanza as specific parts of the physical structure are turned into memory places, into *topoi,* recalling moments from the poem's earlier sections, moments that are themselves meant to memorialize characters, events, or significant scenarios from the past. Thus, for example, the first stanza concentrates on the imagery of the bridge's "bound cable strands," that extend both horizontally (from the anchors on either shore across the two stone towers) and vertically (down from the horizontal cables to support the roadway), evoking them in a musical image of "the flight of strings" and "gleaming staves" as if the bridge were a gigantic Aeolian harp played by the wind or the lyre of Orpheus seen against the night sky with the constellation Lyra in the background.

The harp image reaches backward to the eighth stanza of "To Brooklyn Bridge," where the structure is described as the "*harp and altar of the fury fused*" and forward to stanza 5 of "Atlantis," where Aeolus, the king of the winds, is invoked in a passage describing Jason's ship passing through straits. Employing the characteristic Romantic trope of an object seen in

moonlight to image the imagination's transfigurative power, Crane evokes the transformation of the "cable strands" from the real into the poetic "flight of strings" and "gleaming staves" as occurring while "Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate / The whispered rush, telepathy of wires" (72). This poetic bridge, its harmonizing power evoked in the figure of an ancient harp or lyre, is, as well, twentieth century and American, its music syncopated with an energetic, nervous rhythm by a kind of infectious telepathy. The culmination of the first stanza's harp imagery is a figure of prophetic song in which, from "the gleaming staves— / Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream / As though a god were issue of the strings. . . . " (72), the last line echoing back to the ending of "To Brooklyn Bridge," where the quester prays to this embodiment of love hypostasized as bridgeship, "*Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend / And of the curveship lend a myth to God*" (34).

In the second stanza the image of the bridge's cables as Aeolian harp strings metamorphoses into that of the ropes and rigging of a ship:

> And through that cordage, threading with its call
> One arc synoptic of all tides below—
> Their labyrinthine mouths of history
> Pouring reply as though all ships at sea
> Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry,—
> "Make thy love sure—to weave whose song we ply!" (72)

In a characteristic Cranian pun, he embeds the musical term *chord* within the nautical term *cordage,* homophonically underlining the bridge's associational transformation from harp to ship, and also alluding to that moment in Melville's *Moby-Dick* when, during a storm at sea, the first mate Starbuck says, "Let the Typhoon sing, and strike his harp here in our rigging" (Melville 637). (Of course, the appropriateness of evoking the bridge as a ship is that both are means of crossing from one shore to another, an association heightened by the fact that most ships have a "bridge.") But Crane evokes yet another meaning embedded in *cordage* when he calls the bridge an *arc,* a *chord* also being the geometrical term for the part of a straight line that intersects a curve in two places and thus turns a circle into two arcs.

The image of the bridge as an "arc synoptic of all tides [i.e., times] below" involves voices from the past ("mouths of history") being figured as the conjoined call of "all ships at sea"—a reflexive allusion to the voyage narratives layered beneath the quester's journey in *The Bridge.* But of course in the first stanza the image of the bridge's cables as an Aeolian harp has already alluded to the voyages of Jason, Odysseus, and Aeneas, recalling the role played by the wind god Aeolus in each story. Thus, in Book 4 of Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica,* Hera, the queen of the gods who watches over Jason, sends Iris to tell Aeolus to "make all winds cease under heaven . . . yet let the breath of the west wind blow" so that Jason and the Argo may pass safely between Scylla and Charybdis in the Straits of Messina (347). In Book 10 of the *Odyssey,* Odysseus on his voyage homeward stops at the island of Aeolia, where he and his crew are hospitably received

by Aeolus. On Odysseus's departure Aeolus gives him all the ill winds in a leather bag tied with a string and then sends "forth the breath of the West Wind" (Homer 1:347) to carry Odysseus's ship home. After nine days smooth sailing when he has almost reached Ithaca, Odysseus falls asleep, and his men, who believe that the leather bag contains treasure, untie the string, the ill winds are released, and a storm drives the ship back to the island of Aeolia. This time Aeolus refuses to receive him, saying that he may in no wise "help or send upon his way that man who is hated of the blessed gods" (Homer 1:349). Of course, in the *Aeneid,* Book 1, Juno, who is as much an enemy of Aeneas as Hera is a friend of Jason in the *Argonautica,* visits Aeolus in his cavern and asks him to send winds for a storm at sea to wreck Aeneas's ships.

The image of the bridge and its cables undergoes a still further transformation in the rest of stanza 2: Crane evokes it as a gigantic loom with his image of the cordage "threading with its call / One arc synoptic" and the ships' "complighted . . . cry" to "*weave* whose song we ply" (italics mine). He goes on to make that figure explicit in stanza 4 where the bridge's stone towers strung with cables are described as "towering looms that press / Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade" (72). The implication from stanza 2 is that the regular, back-and-forth movement (contained in the word *ply*) of "all the ships at sea," a movement that throughout history has bound one shore to another, is like the back-and-forth movement of a shuttle in a loom, the shuttle "usually consisting," as the dictionary notes, "of a boat-shaped piece of wood" to which the weft thread is attached and that is used to pass or shoot "the weft thread through the shed from one side of the web to the other." This loom imagery is also probably an allusion to the importance of a loom in the *Odyssey.* Recall that Odysseus's wife Penelope, to ward off the importunate suitors who wish to marry her after Odysseus's assumed death, tells them that she cannot marry until she finishes weaving a shroud for the Greek hero Laertes. Every day Penelope weaves the shroud, and every night she picks the woven threads apart until one of her maids finally tells the suitors of her delaying ruse. Odysseus's sea voyage and Penelope's weaving at her loom are, respectively, the male and female activities balanced in Homer's epic. And any reference to weaving cannot help but call up as well the image of the Fates, the three sisters (Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos) who spin, weave, and cut off the threads of human life.

In evoking the bridge as a gigantic loom—a figuration that specifically develops out of Crane's image of the bridge as a sailing vessel—Crane is also probably alluding to Melville's image of the "Loom of Time" in *Moby-Dick.* In chapter 47 "The Mat-Maker," Ishmael and Queequeg are weaving sword-mats, "a kind of chafing gear wound around the rigging . . . to absorb wear" (Melville 287, n.), and Ishmael says he feels "as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates" (Melville 287–88). He decides that the warp and woof of life's fabric are, respectively, necessity and free will, while the shuttle is chance. Melville revisits this loom image three more times in the

novel: in chapter 93, Ishmael says the mad Pip has seen "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom" (530); in chapter 102, he says, "the shuttle flies—the figures float forth from the loom . . . The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving he is deafened, that he hears no mortal voice" (573); and in chapter 114, he describes "the mingled, mingling threads of life" as being "woven by the warp and woof" (624). Melville got the phrase "the Loom of Time" from Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* where in Book I, chapter 8, musing on the question "Who am I?" Carlyle says, "But that same WHERE, with its brother WHEN, are from the first the master-colours of our Dream-grotto; say, rather, the Canvas (the warp and woof thereof) whereon all our Dreams and Life-visions are painted" (55). Carlyle then quotes his own translation of a passage spoken by the Earth-Spirit in Goethe's *Faust,* Part I, ll. 501–9: "'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply / And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by." From the image of the bridge as a loom weaving together past, present, and future, we are thus led back to Ahab's monomaniac voyaging and its image of the Loom of Time, and back still further to Carlyle's quotation of a phrase from Goethe's *Faust,* another of the quest journeys layered beneath the poem, so that Crane's network of allusive threads supporting and supported by *The Bridge* in effect mimics the network of cables supporting and supported by the actual structure.

In "Atlantis"'s third stanza, Crane returns to the musical imagery associated with an Aeolian harp or Orphic lyre and links it to the image (from the first stanza) of the bridge's network of cables as a "telepathy of wires." The word *telepathy* (coined in 1882, a year before Brooklyn Bridge was completed, and meaning "the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognised channels of sense" [*OED* 2:3252]) is a particularly apt poetic evocation of the way a suspension bridge's cables interact, of the way they withstand weight and the force of winds by referring or communicating the stress from any one part to the entire network, thus preventing a catastrophic buildup of stress at any given point. And since this communication or distribution of stress is almost imperceptible, it resembles a type of mental communication that does not involve "recognised channels of sense." This image of the bridge's "telepathy of wires" as a kind of architectural central nervous system is reprised in stanza 8 where the bridge is apostrophized as "O Thou steeled Cognizance" (73).

But the phrase "telepathy of wires," taken in connection with images from "Atlantis"'s second and third stanzas, is also meant, I would argue, to evoke another kind of unseen, visually imperceptible form of communication, which is to say, meant to suggest the bridge's network of cables as a gigantic radio antenna. The relevant lines in stanza 3 are: "And on, obliquely up bright carrier bars / New octaves trestle the twin monoliths / Beyond whose frosted capes the moon bequeaths / Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)" (72). The word *octaves* sets up the stanza's musical associations, but it is the multiple connotations of the phrase "carrier bars" that is most intriguing. In "Atlantis"'s first stanza, Crane had imaged the

horizontal cables of the bridge as "gleaming staves," comparing them to the horizontal lines of the musical staff, and in this musical context the phrase "carrier bars" would then evoke the vertical cables that drop down from the horizontal ones (and that "carry" the roadway) as the musical staff's vertical bar lines marking the measures. But at the time Crane was writing *The Bridge,* the more usual and thus more expected two-word phrase beginning with *carrier* would have been a term from the recent technology of radio transmission: "carrier wave," that is, the type of high-frequency radio wave on which information was carried through amplitude modulation (AM) in Crane's day.

That Crane formed the phrase "carrier bars" by analogy with the radio term "carrier wave" is supported by two other details from the preceding stanzas. In the third line of stanza 3, the image of "frosted capes" is meant to recall a detail at the start of "Cape Hatteras" about the way ships at sea communicated with the land: "And from above, thin squeaks of radio static, / The captured fume of space foams in our ears— / What whisperings of far watches on the main / Relapsing into silence" (54). And this imagery of ship-to-shore radio is probably at work in the line from "Atlantis"'s stanza 2: "as though all ships at sea / Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry." Crane refers to the omnipresence of radio in American life in one of the headlines from "The River" section: "RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME" (41). And a few lines later he invokes the image of electronic communication by wire, either telegraphic or telephonic: "The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas / Loped under wires that span the mountain stream. / Keen instruments strung to a vast precision / Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream" (41–42). (Recall in this connection the image from Joseph Stella's essay on Brooklyn Bridge of "the fluid telegraph wires, trembling around, as if expecting to propagate a new musical message, like aerial guides" [Stella 87].) Once Crane had compared the bridge's cables to the strings of an Aeolian harp (that makes music out of the movement of the wind), it would have been a short associative step, through the connotative resonances of the phrase "telepathy of wires," for him to evoke the bridge's network of cables as a radio antenna, another instrument capable of pulling music out of the air.

We should note that the musical imagery of "Atlantis"'s first three stanzas does not serve simply to liken the shape of Brooklyn Bridge to an enormous musical staff or a gigantic stringed instrument, it also functions as a self-referential evocation of both "Atlantis"'s stanzaic pattern and of the entire epic's internal subdivisions, which is to say, an evocation of the very forms by which poetic music is created, the word *octave* being not only a musical term for an eight-note interval but also a poetic one for an eight-line stanza. And this octave structure extends from the stanzas of "Atlantis" to *The Bridge* as a whole, for though there are fifteen individually titled poems that make up the entire work, Crane has arranged these, more or less arbitrarily, into eight sections (excluding the proem "To Brooklyn Bridge"), each designated with a Roman numeral (I: Ave Maria; II: Powhatan's Daughter; III: Cutty Sark; IV: Cape Hatteras; V: Three Songs; VI:

Quaker Hill; VII: The Tunnel; VIII: Atlantis). Given this musical structuring, one is also tempted to read the fact of there being *twelve* eight-line stanzas in "Atlantis" as an allusion to the dodecaphonic character of the chromatic scale, its steps and half-steps, the white keys plus the black.

In the third line of "Atlantis"'s third stanza, the phrase "frosted capes" again adds the imagery of sailing to that of the music the wind makes in a ship's rigging, and the comparison of bridge to ship becomes explicit in lines six and seven: "White tempest nets file upward, upward ring / With silver terraces the humming spars" (72). Appropriately, this imagery brings with it further allusions to the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. Line eight of the third stanza ("The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars") depends, as we noted earlier, on a dual sense of the word *helm*: as the wheel or tiller of a ship whose direction is set by celestial navigation and as the starry helmet worn by the goddess Pallas Athena in the statue known as the Palladium. Crane makes veiled reference to the *Aeneid* in "Atlantis"'s first stanza with his image of the bridge's wind-blown cables as strings of a lyre from which "Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream / As though a god were issue of the strings," the allusion being to the Cumaean Sibyl who was a prophetess of Apollo (the god who gave the first lyre [invented by Hermes] to his son Orpheus). This continues in stanza 2's image of the "labyrinthine mouths of history / Pouring reply" that recalls the description of the Sibyl's cavern in *Aeneid,* Book 6: "The huge side of the Euboean rock is hewn into a cavern, whither lead a hundred wide mouths, a hundred gateways, whence rush as many voices, the answers of the Sibyl" (Virgil 1:509). Finally, in stanza 3 the reference to "Two worlds of sleep" evokes the end of Book 6 and the "two gates of Sleep" (Virgil 1:571), one of horn, whence issue true dreams, the other of ivory, from which come false dreams and through which Aeneas and the Sibyl return to the upper world.

The various allusions to the *Aeneid* in the first three stanzas of "Atlantis" are all to Aeneas's underworld journey; those at the end of stanza 4 and the beginning of stanza 5 refer to the story of Dido and Aeneas. In stanza 4, Crane speaks of the "cipher-script of time no traveller reads / But who, through smoking pyres of love and death, / Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears" (73). Though these lines may also refer to the burning of Troy, it becomes more likely (with the start of stanza 5 and its references to Tyre and Troy—the cities, from which Dido and Aeneas had fled, the former to found Carthage, the latter to found the city that would become Rome) that the image of the "smoking pyres of love and death" is primarily an allusion to the ending of Book 4, where Dido, deserted by Aeneas, stabs herself atop her funeral pyre, its flames being seen by Aeneas as his ship sails from the harbor. With that allusion it also becomes clear what it means to read the "cipher-script of time," which is to say, to read the recurrences of certain hidden (Crane might say "encrypted") structures throughout history: the way, for example, that the mating of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas (along with Maquokeeta's subsequent death and immolation) repeats that of Aeneas and Dido (along with her subsequent end) and, further, the way that these fatal conjunctions foreshadow the doom of

a people (Rome's destruction of Carthage in the Punic Wars and the Amerindians' historical loss of the virgin continent to the whites).

As with many moments in "Atlantis" where Crane uses a word or image to link a theme evoked here back to its extended development in *The Bridge,* the image of the "traveller" who reads the "cipher-script of time" by searching "the timeless *laugh* of mythic spears" (italics mine) resonates in several earlier parts of the poem. Maquokeeta's transformation had begun with his being burned at the stake, a change that Crane (invoking the myth of the salamander that lives in fire) depicts as that of "the lizard in the furious noon, / That drops his legs and colors in the sun," thereby becoming the serpent of Time. Then, after his translation to the heavens, Maquokeeta is described as "thewed of the levin" (48). But this serpent-like levin or lightning is subsequently described as spear-like in "Cape Hatteras," where Crane speaks of "the levin's lance" (57). Now, given that Maquokeeta, during his transformation by fire, "*laughs,* pure serpent, Time itself, and moon / Of his own fate" (47, italics mine) and, further, that this serpent of Time is ultimately translated into the eternally recurring (i.e., timeless) Morning Star and, finally, that Maquokeeta as serpent is associated with "the levin's *lance*" (italics mine), we can begin to grasp the set of linked allusions Crane has packed into the traveler's work of searching "the timeless laugh of mythic spears."

In the midst of the musical and nautical imagery of "Atlantis"'s third stanza, Crane adds a detail that shifts our attention from the bridge's cables to its stone towers: he calls its moonlit pathway a "crystal-flooded aisle" (72). By the sixth stanza the images evoking the bridge in terms of a Christian church or cathedral become more pervasive at the same time that language associated with the Christian deity begins to replace the imagery of Greco-Roman gods implicit in the classical allusions of the first five stanzas. Thus, in stanza 6 the bridge is apostrophized as a "Choir, translating time" (the word *translating* connoting the movement from earthly time to the eternal stars), a "multitudinous Verb" (evoking the Judeo-Christian deity whose essence is existence: "I am who am"), "Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage" and "Psalm of Cathay" (alluding to Columbus's voyage, that would ultimately Christianize the New World), and, finally, as "O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm" (73) (the word *Paradigm,* like the earlier *Verb,* alluding to the nature of the Trinity's second person as the Word or Logos). Crane capitalizes the names of these attributes or qualities as if they were appellations of the deity. He picks up the cathedral music imagery for the bridge again in stanza 8 where he says, "like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom— / Sight, sound, and flesh Thou leadest from time's realm" (73). But note in Crane's abbreviated evocation of the history of Western religion (as it moves from the classical Greco-Roman deities implicitly evoked in "Atlantis"'s opening stanzas through the Christian imagery of the middle ones) that the quester is ultimately headed toward a secular, humanistic "epiphany" (etymologically, a deity's ability to show itself in the light or as the Light), a kind of Whitmanian pantheism. In stanza 9 he addresses

the bridge as "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth / Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound" (74).

In stanza 4, Crane had begun weaving into the fabric of "Atlantis" a strand of allusions to the Amerindian world and the mating of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas with the image of the "smoking pyres of love and death," and he continues this in the opening line of stanza 6 with the phrase "From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums," imagery recalling the quester's journey downriver to the Gulf of Mexico to share in Maquokeeta's suffering, with this latter scene beginning "Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on" (47). But the quester's identification with Maquokeeta gives another possible connotation to the phrase "From gulfs unfolding": his imaginative participation in the chieftain's psyche perhaps unfolding for the quester the cultural and spiritual gulf between twentieth-century America and his imaginary Amerindian world.

The Amerindian allusions continue in stanza 6 with the phrase "Psalm of Cathay," evoking the original goal of Columbus's voyage to the East and thus the ultimate source of the New World's inhabitants being called "Indians." And the imagery of Columbus's discoveries continues with the opening lines of stanza 7: "We left the haven hanging in the night— / Sheened harbor lanterns backward fled the keel. / Pacific here at time's end, bearing corn" (73). The Indian corn or maize, something unknown to the Old World till his voyage, resonates back to the image of Pocahontas as the Indian Corn Mother who "ran the neighing canyons all the spring; / She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die" (45). This image of springtime's annual resurrection metamorphoses into a reflexive figure of poetic song's hoped-for eternal recurrence in the stanza's last line, as "The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!" (73).[1]

§ 23
"Atlantis" and the Image of Flight; Shelley's "To a Skylark"; Pater and the Tears of Dionysus

So far we have seen how Crane, in evoking the bridge's network of cables as threads interwoven on a gigantic loom, presents us with an image of his own interweaving in "Atlantis" of allusive strands into a complex web of associations, and he adds yet another strand at the start of stanza 8: "O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits / The agile precincts of the lark's return" (73). Crane several times associates the bridge (the tallest man-made structure in the New World when it opened in 1883) with a bird's soaring flight in order to convey notions of freedom, vision, and discovery. In "Atlantis"'s fourth stanza the reference to seagulls ("Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls stung with rime . . . / Pick biting way up towering looms" [72]) harks back to the opening image of "To Brooklyn Bridge," where the seagull's flight builds "*high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty,*" an analogue of a suspension bridge's freedom of movement in the wind

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("Implicitly thy freedom staying thee" [33]). Flight as a figure of bodily transcendence through knowledge is, of course, a familiar Faustian motif, and the visionary ability to see farther in both space and time (because of an "elevated" consciousness, considered either figuratively or literally) was for Crane the essence of discoverers like Columbus (whose ships were hailed by the Indians as "The Great White Birds" [48]) and the Wright brothers, the inventors of powered flight. But when Crane addresses the bridge at the start of stanza 8, he is not only comparing Brooklyn Bridge's soaring above the East River to a bird's flight but also, in the kind of characteristic shift we have seen before in "Atlantis," suddenly talking about his poem's poetic structure as well.

For "the lark's return" is not simply that of a soaring and singing bird to the spring sky above New York harbor, it is the return of an earlier poem, Shelley's "To a Skylark," and its structure into Crane's "Atlantis." Earlier we spoke of "To Brooklyn Bridge" and "Atlantis" as both being extended acts of naming in which the bridge is likened to, among other things, a harp, an altar, a threshold, a pariah's prayer, a lover's cry, a lyre, a musical stave, a ship and its riggings, a loom, an antenna, a cathedral, and so on, the multitude of names evoking the transfigurative nature of the muse. And in "Atlantis"'s eighth stanza, Crane implicitly directs our attention to the way this practice of listing similitudes for the poem's central symbolic object replicates the poetic flight of an earlier lark: "What thou art we know not, / What is most like thee? / From rainbow clouds there flow not / Drops so bright to see / As from thy presence showers a rain of melody." Shelley goes on in the first two lines of each of the next four stanzas to list the following similes: "Like a Poet hidden / In the light of thought," "Like a high-born maiden / In a palace-tower," "Like a glow worm golden / In a dell of dew," and "Like a rose embowered / In its own green leaves" (*Selected* 397–98). The similarities in phrasing and in line placement within each stanza emphasize the listing cadence meant to draw attention to the poet engaged in an act of generative naming that to some degree creates the thing it names.

As we noted earlier, one of the organizing systems for memory places was the constellations of the zodiac, and the implicit references to various star groups in the earlier stanzas of "Atlantis" (as, for example, to the constellation Lyra in stanza 1 and to the constellation Argo Navis in stanza 4 where the bridge is evoked as Jason's ship) are made clear in the middle of stanza 8 when Crane says of the bridge: "Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing / In single chrysalis the many twain,— / Of stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow" (73). Crane images the curve of the bridge as the loop of a lariat within whose bend are snared the stars seen nightly through the open network of the bridge's cables. From this image of a lariat (and its implied imagery of a cowboy roping or herding animals), it is a short associative step to the figure of a horse and the "stallion glow" of the constellation Pegasus. But that phrase "the stitch and stallion glow" linking the winged horse of poetry to the notion of sewing or weaving may also be an allusion to one of the most famous images in Yeats's work: In

"Adam's Curse" Yeats describes the work involved in writing metrical verse, hard labor that must be disguised so the finished product seems the most easy, natural kind of speech: "I said, 'A line may take us hours maybe; / Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought, / Our stitching and unstitching has been naught'" (*Poems* 80). Crane certainly understood the pun in that last line and just as certainly intended that it carry over into his phrase "the stitch and stallion glow" as applied to the Bridge/*Bridge,* for the word *stitch,* in evoking Crane's poem as something woven or sewn together line by line as in Yeats's image, depends as well on our hearing the echo of the Greek root *stich* (a line of verse, as in the English words *hemistich, distich,* and *stichomythia*).

The appropriateness of the Shelley and Yeats passages echoed in stanza 8 is that both offer earlier examples of a poet turning for a moment from elaborating his poem's ostensible subject in order to make the activity of writing poetry (or of writing this particular poem) his subject. There is, of course, a long tradition in American literature of works that bear the name of their central symbolic objects, works where this object is either compared at some point to a book (as in the "Cetology" chapter of *Moby-Dick*) or is itself some sort of linguistic artifact (as with Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or Poe's "Manuscript Found in a Bottle," "The Purloined Letter," *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym,* and *The Journal of Julius Rodman*)—works where part of the significance of the eponymous object is its self-reference, its always referring back to the written work bearing its name as that work is in the very process of elaborating or creating that object—a tradition of which *The Bridge* is very much a part.

"Atlantis"'s first eight stanzas constitute, in effect, a nocturnal evocation of the bridge (the structure seen against the night sky's constellations), but with the start of stanza 9, dawn begins to break. As we noted earlier, in *The Bridge* the coming of dawn is a recurring image of visionary enlightenment or revelation, and "Atlantis"'s evocation of the bridge from nighttime, into daylight (stanzas 9 through 11), and back to night (stanza 12) parallels and in some sense completes the movement in "To Brooklyn Bridge" from dawn (stanza 1) through noon (stanza 6) to night (stanza 9).

The light imagery begins with stanza 9's very first line: the bridge is apostrophized as a "Swift peal of secular light" and within two more lines described as "iridescently upborne / Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins; / With white escarpments swinging into light" (74). The "white escarpments" are meant to balance the image of the nighttime bridge's "black embankments" in stanza 2, and the "fabric of our veins" is yet another instance of the weaving imagery associated with the bridge as loom and thus with *Moby-Dick*'s "Loom of Time." The concluding lines of stanza 9 take up the dawn imagery and evoke the bridge as an emblem of national unity linking the urban to the rural: "Sustained in tears the cities are endowed / And justified conclamant with ripe fields" (74).

We know from other Crane poems that "tears" are often an image of the generative power of rain, as in "Lachrymae Christi" where "Some sentient cloud / Of tears flocks through the tendoned loam" (15). There

Crane represents the teardrop-shaped grapes and the wine fermented from them as the tears of a god annually resurrected with the vine only to die again, and the name of the wine, "the tears of Christ," was clearly linked in Crane's mind to the Greek god Dionysus because, as we noted earlier, it recalled a famous image from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*: "From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man" (*Tragedy* 73). In "Lachrymae Christi" Crane's figuration of Dionysus was influenced, as we also noted earlier, by Walter Pater's essay "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew" in his volume *Greek Studies* (1895). (Indeed, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this essay and its imagery for the entire body of Crane's work.) Pater rehearses the story of Dionysus, a child born of the union of Zeus, the sky god, and a mortal woman, Semele, "an old Greek word, as it seems, for the surface of the earth" (*Greek* 7:24) (a union not unlike that of Maquokeeta, as sky or rain god, and Pocahontas, as Corn Mother or earth goddess). Semele asks to see her lover in the glory with which he is seen by the immortal Hera. He appears to her in lightning, but the mortal may not behold him and live. Semele gives premature birth to the child Dionysus, whom, to preserve it from the jealousy of Hera, Zeus hides in a part of his thigh, the child returning into the loins of its father, whence in due time it is born again (*Greek* 7:24). (We might note here a further analogy between the unions of Zeus/Semele and Maquokeeta/Pocahontas in that each ends with the incineration of one of the pair's members.) One of Dionysus's titles is thus "the twice-born": born first of the lightning that incinerates his mother and then, having been returned to Zeus's "loins," reborn from the father's moisture or seminal fluid.

Pater in effect associates the features of Dionysus's myth as the wine god with aspects of Greek viniculture, and Crane in "Lachrymae Christi" seems to have gone him one better: Linking Dionysus's being "fire-born" (*Greek* 7:26) with the annual burning back of the grapevines to increase their health and fertility, Crane says, "Thy face / From charred and riven stakes, O / Dionysus, Thy / Unmangled target smile" (15). Crane also seems to have understood Pater's epithet for the wine-god Dionysus, "the spiritual form of fire and dew," as referring to the grape's combining within itself the sun's fiery heat and the rain's moisture to produce, when crushed and its juice fermented, a fiery liquid whose consumption breaks down the individual's sense of isolation and creates an intoxicated, visionary feeling of universal brotherhood with all nature. And with that sense of universal sympathy another Cranian symbolism for "tears" (as the image of an intense fellow-feeling allowing one to participate wholly in another person's consciousness) comes into play: In the grip of this visionary intoxication, as he says in "Wine Menagerie," "Wine talons / Build freedom up about me and distill / This competence—to travel in a tear / Sparkling alone, within another's will" (17)—the kind of participation in another's life that the poetic quester achieves in "Cutty Sark" after drinking all night with the old sailor.

Given the connotations of the word *tears* for Crane, we can see that

when he evokes the bridge in the last lines of "Atlantis"'s eighth stanza as the link between the countryside and the city such that "Sustained in tears the cities are endowed / And justified conclamant with ripe fields," one meaning of the sustaining tears is clearly the rain that allows the fields to ripen and supply the sustenance of the city. But if another association of the word is the tears of Dionysus from which "sprang man," then there is an additional resonance to this linking of countryside and city, one that Crane would have found in Pater's essay on Dionysus. Pater points out that Dionysus was originally a god of the countryside and the vineyards, of intoxicated madness and the wildness of nature, and that he came "at an assignable date, under Peisistratus; out of the country, into the town" (*Greek* 7:39), into Athens: "Gradually, his rough country feasts" were "outdone by the feasts of the town; and as comedy arose out of those, so these" gave "rise to tragedy":

> For his entrance upon this new stage of his career, his coming into town, is from the first tinged with melancholy, as if in entering the town he had put off his country peace. The other Olympians are above sorrow. Dionysus, like a strenuous mortal hero, like Hercules or Perseus, has his alternations of joy and sorrow . . . It is out of the sorrows of Dionysus, then—of Dionysus in winter—that all Greek tragedy grows; out of the song of the sorrows of Dionysus, sung at his winter feast by the chorus of satyrs, singers clad in goat-skins, in memory of his rural life, one and another of whom, from time to time, steps out of the company to emphasise and develope this or that circumstance of the story; and so the song becomes dramatic. (*Greek* 7:39–40)

But, as Pater explains, Dionysus is not just a god of winter, he is "a dual god" of light and dark, joy and sorrow, "of both summer and winter," and as such "he comes at last to have a scope equal to that of Demeter, . . . the whole productive power of the earth is in him, and the explanation of its annual change. As some embody their intuitions of that power in corn, so others in wine. He is the dispenser of the earth's hidden wealth, giver of riches through the vine, as Demeter through the grain," (*Greek* 7:14), until, as Pater says, he becomes "ultimately . . . almost identical with Demeter" (7:43). And this seems in part an explanation of why he is a "woman-like god" and why "Dionysus is especially a woman's deity" (7:57, 7:64). Given the god's link to tragedy and the annual changes of nature, the tears of Dionysus represent that tragic vision of life whose purpose is to reconcile man to death by exhibiting in a ritual or play that, as humans are part of nature, so their deaths are an inevitable function of the natural cycle, a tragic yet joyful vision embodied in Dionysus as a dying-and-reviving god. Once, as Pater says, the rural god has entered the city and tragedy begins, the tears of Dionysus sustain and justify the city and countryside together in a revivifying vision, a vision that though individual lives end, Life or *Bios* persists. One might note in passing that Pater's emphasis on the linking of Dionysus with Demeter, the wine god with the corn goddess (indeed, a linking so close that Dionysus "actually becomes at last, in confused, half-developed tradition," the "son or brother of Persephone" [*Greek* 7:45]),

would undoubtedly have added in Crane's mind a further dimension to the mating of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas as the sky god and Corn Mother in "The Dance."[1]

§ 24
Love and Light; Love-as-Bridgeship; Pater and Botticelli's *Venus*; Venus and the Rainbow; Foam-Born; Pyramids and Fire; *From Ritual to Romance*; Venus and Adonis

If, as I've argued, something like an implicit history of mythological or religious belief in the West underlies the first eight stanzas of "Atlantis," with the references in stanzas 1 through 5 being mainly to the classical world and in stanzas 6 through 8 to the Christian world, then with the first line of stanza 9 where he hails the bridge as "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth / Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound" (74), Crane starts explicitly to elaborate for the modern world a secular, humanistic "god-term" (a man-made term implying supreme sacredness), and that term, as one would expect from "Atlantis"'s epigraph, is Love. As Love is the Platonically idealized force that brings together individuals and communities, so Crane makes the bridge the physical embodiment of that unifying force, the phallic, linking third term between isolated entities. And from stanza 9 onward to the end of "Atlantis," Crane applies to the bridge, as the physical incarnation of love's linking power, names and images associated with either classical deities, the Christian deity, or both, but always with a slight twist appropriate to this new secular dispensation.

He begins by associating the myth of love-as-bridgeship with light, a figuration that resonates in the Greek god of light Apollo, the Old Testament God's "Be light made," and the New Testament's identification of light and love in the Logos at the beginning of John's Gospel. Part of Crane's aim in calling light our secular, intrinsic myth is to emphasize the priority of man's sense of light's sacredness to any subsequent religious overlay personifying that feature in an apotheosized being. And it is toward that ideal of the original sense of the phenomenal world's sacredness that "Atlantis" builds. This project (like Stevens's goal of thinking the first idea, the idea of the sun before it acquired the old names) was one that Crane understood must be for twentieth-century man more potential than actual, as expressed in the Isadora Duncan epigraph to "Quaker Hill": "*no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth.*" Though one can be sure that Crane would also have recalled Emerson's words that the poet's reward is "that the ideal shall be real to thee" (Emerson 3:42).

In "The Dance" when the quester imaginatively attempts to participate in the Amerindian consciousness of oneness with the land, Crane explicitly indicates his sense that achieving this original earliness is more ideal than real: the quester says to Maquokeeta, "Medicine-man, relent, restore— / Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!" (47). If for a modern American the ability to recover that sense of a tribal morn must necessarily be a lie, if

would undoubtedly have added in Crane's mind a further dimension to the mating of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas as the sky god and Corn Mother in "The Dance."[1]

§ 24
Love and Light; Love-as-Bridgeship; Pater and Botticelli's *Venus*; Venus and the Rainbow; Foam-Born; Pyramids and Fire; *From Ritual to Romance*; Venus and Adonis

If, as I've argued, something like an implicit history of mythological or religious belief in the West underlies the first eight stanzas of "Atlantis," with the references in stanzas 1 through 5 being mainly to the classical world and in stanzas 6 through 8 to the Christian world, then with the first line of stanza 9 where he hails the bridge as "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth / Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound" (74), Crane starts explicitly to elaborate for the modern world a secular, humanistic "god-term" (a man-made term implying supreme sacredness), and that term, as one would expect from "Atlantis"'s epigraph, is Love. As Love is the Platonically idealized force that brings together individuals and communities, so Crane makes the bridge the physical embodiment of that unifying force, the phallic, linking third term between isolated entities. And from stanza 9 onward to the end of "Atlantis," Crane applies to the bridge, as the physical incarnation of love's linking power, names and images associated with either classical deities, the Christian deity, or both, but always with a slight twist appropriate to this new secular dispensation.

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one can no longer think the first idea, enjoy a wholly original relationship to the physical world such that one could name objects with something like an Adamic force, then perhaps the next best thing is to rehearse the old names given to the physical world's most striking and precious attributes, attributes that have either been separately apotheosized or figured as deific qualities in different eras, rehearse them with an awareness of their historical development—that no name is final but that each brings with it some aspect of man's sense of the world's sacredness, and that a new naming, reiterating the ideal of an originary naming, will always be forthcoming.

From associating love-as-bridgeship with light (a light so ideally pure and everywhere emanating that it does not permit the shadow of death to be cast), Crane then goes on to hail the bridge as "O River-throated" (74), evoking the arc of the bridge above the East River and the arc of the subway below as forming together a mouth or throat through which the river flows, the river of time flowing out of the circle of eternal recurrence, much as at the end of "The River" the American river of history, the Mississippi, flows into the timeless Gulf, allowing the quester to journey back imaginatively five centuries to the pre-Columbian world of the Indians. But of course, the epithet "O River-throated" applies as well to the poem *The Bridge,* for Crane's epic song aims to be, as he says in stanza 2, "One arc synoptic of all tides [times] below— / Their labyrinthine mouths of history / Pouring reply" (72), with the shape of that initial word "O" emblematizing the mouth-like form created by the arc of the bridge above and the arc of the tunnel below.

In stanza 9's next lines Crane associates love-as-bridgeship with another image linking love and water, the well-known image of a classical goddess born from the sea painted by a Renaissance, Christian artist: he describes the bridge as "iridescently upborne / Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins" (74). The painting is, of course, Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, but Crane's lines have been influenced more both by the description of the picture in Pater's chapter on Botticelli in *The Renaissance* (1873) and by Crane's own reimagining of the painting in the last section of "Voyages" than by the painting itself. Discussing Botticelli's "peevish-looking Madonnas," Pater says that the artist has created a type who "though she holds in her hands the 'Desire of all nations,' is one of those who is neither for Jehovah nor for His enemies; and her choice is on her face . . . Her trouble is in the very caress of the mysterious child" (*Renaissance* 44). Pater goes on to say that Botticelli "carries this sentiment into classical subjects, its most complete expression being a picture in the *Uffizi*, of Venus rising from the sea" (45) (fig. 24.1). Describing the color of the painting as "cadaverous or at least cold," he calls this "imaginative colouring," a "spirit" upon "natural things . . . by which they become expressive to the spirit" (45). And he claims that Botticelli's painting represents "a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves . . . Of the Greeks as they really were, of their difference from ourselves, of the aspects of their outward life, we know far more than Botticelli . . . ; but for us long familiarity has

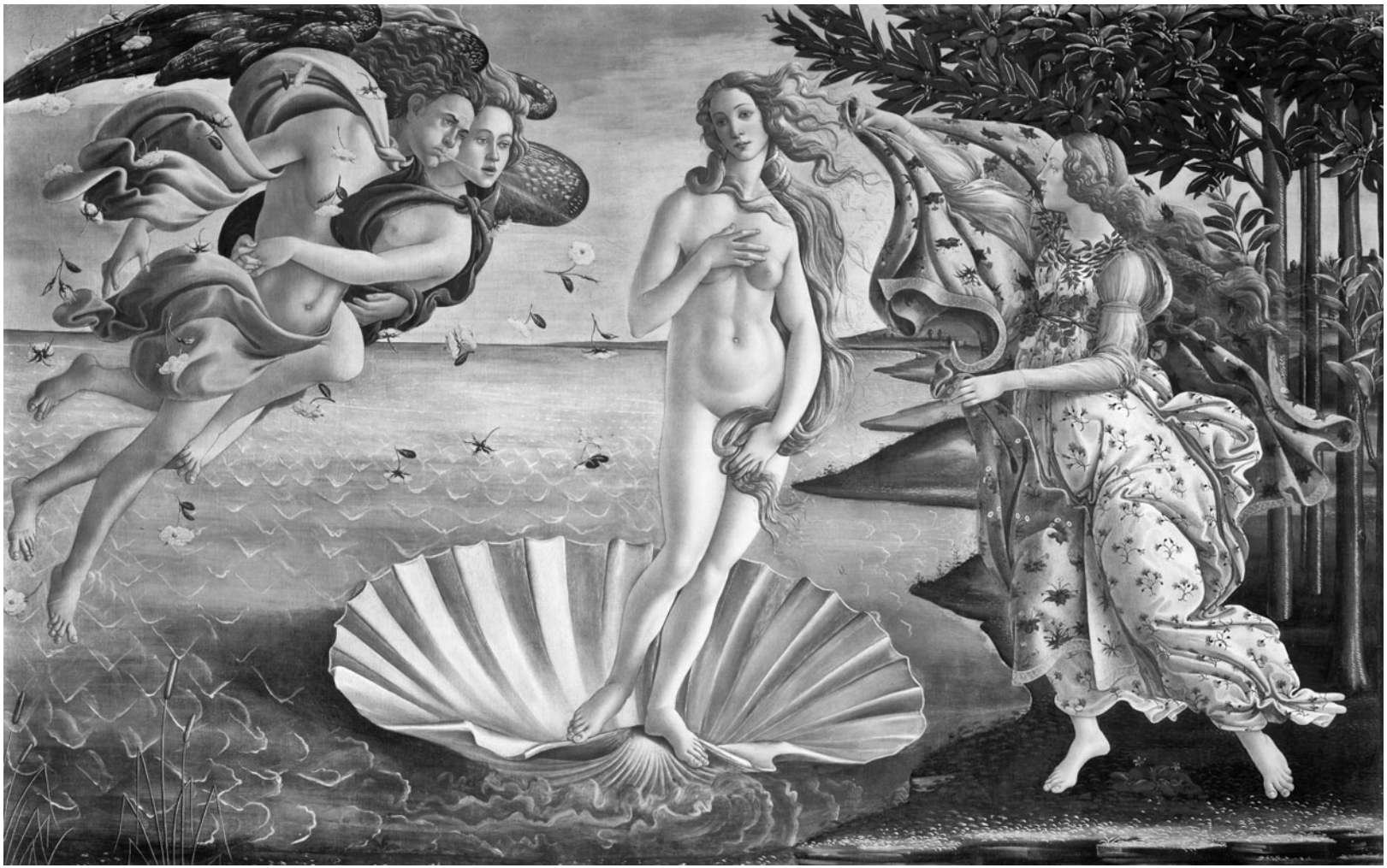

Figure 24.1. Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus,* ca. 1484. Tempera on canvas, 68 × 109½ in. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy. Photograph by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

taken off the edge of the lesson, and we are hardly conscious of what we owe to the Hellenic spirit. But in pictures like this of Botticelli's you have a record of the first impression made by it on minds turned back towards it, in almost painful aspiration" (45–46). In Botticelli's painting of Venus, "the light is indeed cold—mere sunless dawn . . . and you might think that the sorrow in her face was at the thought of the whole long day of love yet to come," but Pater explains that the "peculiar character" exhibited by Botticelli's art is "the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rarer moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks . . . He paints the story of the goddess of pleasure in other episodes besides that of her birth from the sea, but never without some shadow of death in the grey flesh and wan flowers. He paints Madonnas, but they shrink from the pressure of the divine child, and plead in unmistakable undertones for a warmer, lower humanity" (46–47).

The importance for Crane of Pater's description of Botticelli's painting lies, first of all, in Pater's contention that the painting is a "more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves," which is to say, that it represents the impact of the Hellenic spirit in all its early freshness on the beginnings of modern Europe. Since one of the ongoing themes of *The Renaissance* is the assimilation, or at very least, the accommodation, that the artists and poets of the Renaissance tried to make between the classical deities and the Christian pantheon—a theme pursued most explicitly in Pater's chapter on Pico della Mirandola—Crane would have seen his project in *The Bridge* (with its layering of ancient quest journeys beneath the narrative) and, more specifically, in "Atlantis" (with its names and attributes attributed to the bridge drawn from both classical and Christian deities) as analogous to Pater's sense of the Renaissance's project, a project Pater reenacts in pointing out the similarity of Botticelli's handling of the Madonna to his handling of Venus.

The second reason Pater's Botticelli essay is important for Crane's imagery is that Pater specifically identifies the action in Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* as the goddess's "rising from the sea." Yet strictly speaking, that is not what the painting depicts. What it shows, as Pater describes later in the essay, is the figure of Venus standing on a cockleshell as "an emblematical figure of the wind blows hard across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea 'showing his teeth,' as it moves in thin lines of foam" (46). There are in fact two emblematical figures of the wind in the painting, and the episode from Venus's myth being shown here is one Crane would have found explained in Bulfinch. Though Homer says that Aphrodite/Venus is the daughter of Zeus and Dione, yet, Bulfinch notes, "others say that Venus sprang from the foam of the sea. The zephyr wafted her along the waves to the Isle of Cyprus, where she was received and attired by the Seasons, and then led to the assembly of the gods" (Bulfinch 11). The usual etymology of the name Aphrodite is "foam-born" or "foam-risen" (Hamilton 32), and we know that Crane was familiar

with this etymology from a line in his 1917 poem "The Bathers": "They say that Venus shot through foam to light" (95). The "thin lines of foam" which Pater remarks moving beneath the goddess's cockleshell emblematize the derivation. The episode depicted in Botticelli's painting is, then, Venus being wafted by the "zephyr . . . along the waves" presumably to "the Isle of Cyprus," a site particularly connected with the goddess's worship, where she is met by the nymph Pomona, the ancient goddess of fruit trees, who carries a brocaded mantle to cover her.

Bearing in mind Pater's original description of the painting as "Venus, rising from the sea," consider the ending of Crane's "Voyages VI," a poem that evokes love as a sea journey between separated bodies and that concludes with a vision of love personified and residing on a beautiful isle:

> Creation's blithe and petalled word
> To the lounged goddess when she rose
> Conceding dialogue with eyes
> That smile unsearchable repose—
>
> Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,
> —Unfolded floating dais before
> Which rainbows twine continual hair. (29)

Consider the details and connections here: the goddess (clearly, the goddess of love) rises (presumably from the sea), and there is a "floating dais" (the cockleshell?) and before the dais "rainbows twine continual hair." In Botticelli's painting Venus is shown covering her right breast with her right arm and holding the end of her knee-length, golden hair in front of her pubes with her left hand. The associative logic that links rainbows and hair in Crane's line might run like this: Venus is born from the sea foam and has been blown across the waves by the zephyr, and when sea spray becomes mixed with an oily substance such as that naturally secreted by luxuriant hair, the damp hair can acquire in the light a rainbow-like iridescence. Whether this represents the connection that led Crane to the image, there can be no doubt that he associates the goddess's hair with a rainbow, just as there can be no doubt that this goddess who rises is associated with a "floating dais" and an isle. And given Crane's project in "Atlantis," the further association he makes in the final stanza of "Voyages VI" should come as no surprise, for at the conclusion of "Voyages" he links the classical deity who personifies love to the second person of the Christian Trinity, the Logos or Word, that son who was given to death because "God so loved the world." Whether the personification of love or the incarnation of love (for Crane they are both a matter of the imagination of love), "The imaged Word, it is" (29).

With all this in mind, consider again the lines from "Atlantis"'s stanza 9: "O River-throated—iridescently upborne / Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins." The language evokes something rising (something being "upborne"), and in the second line the words *drench* and *veins* suggest that the rising is that of a body out of water, a rising that is described

as iridescent, as having the colors of the rainbow. (Only eight lines later the bridge will be explicitly compared to the rainbow as "Deity's glittering Pledge.") To appreciate the image of Venus being subtly evoked here, we must keep in mind the situation in which the bridge is addressed as "O River-throated." The bridge arcing over the river and the tunnel arcing beneath form an oval through which the river flows into the sea, an image, I would argue, that Crane meant to suggest coitus and insemination and thus recall that earlier scene of another river pouring into the sea at the end of "The River." In that scene, the Mississippi, the Father of Waters, moving "in lengthening might" downward toward the open sea, "lifts itself from its long bed" and pours itself into the Gulf, so that "the Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow" (44–45), the ending of "The River" foreshadowing the insemination of the earth goddess by the sky god in "The Dance."[1]

The evocation in "Atlantis"'s stanza 9 of something rising, of something upborne, is probably meant to suggest not only the goddess of love rising from the sea but also another rising that occurs at the sight of the naked goddess, a rising linked to the notion of the bridge as a phallic, linking third term. Recall in this connection that in "Voyages" Crane evokes love not just as a sea journey between separated bodies but also, in the consummation of the act of love, as a water passage between bodies (the passage of seminal fluid). And recall as well when Bulfinch notes that "others say that Venus sprang from the foam of the sea," one of those others is Hesiod, who tells in the *Theogony* how Earth bore starry Heaven "to cover her on every side" and how Heaven lay with Earth and she bore many children of the union, among them Cronos, who "hated his lusty sire" (87–89). Earth, inciting Cronos "to punish the vile outrage of your father; for he first thought of doing shameful things," gives him a great sickle as a weapon: "And Heaven came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about the Earth spreading himself full upon her. Then the son from his ambush . . . swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them . . . from the land into the surging sea . . . ; and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden . . . Her gods and men call Aphrodite . . . because she grew amid the foam" (Hesiod 91–93).

The Greeks seem to have understood one of Heaven's amputated members that Cronos threw into the sea as being the father's penis and the foam from which the maiden was born as the father's semen. Once again, we have a myth of the mating of sky and earth. While the male figure dies in this mating in Hesiod, as he does in Crane's story of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, there exists, as an implicit scenario between these two, the birth of Venus and her special love for her son Aeneas and another mating (Dido and Aeneas) in a rainstorm whose ultimate result is that the female, rather than the male, figure dies, a death finally accomplished when the messenger of the gods who is also the goddess of the rainbow, Iris (whose name is the ultimate root of the word *iridescent*), descends from the sky, her saffron-colored wings making a rainbow in the sunlight, to clip a lock of Dido's hair as an offering to Proserpina and thus release Dido's soul from

her body. Thus Dido, who dies for love, would be another instance of a woman "iridescently upborne."

The implied presence of Venus in "Atlantis"'s stanza 9 prepares us for the appearances of two Venus-related figures in stanzas 10 and 11. After comparing the bridge to a rainbow in the opening line of stanza 10, Crane returns in the rest of the stanza to the imagery of the bridge's soaring cables, and as he has previously associated this soaring with a bird's flight, so he now evokes it in terms of a different type of winged being: "Always through spiring cordage, pyramids / Of silver sequel, Deity's young name / Kinetic of white choiring wings . . . ascends" (74). Though this image might apply to the ascension of Jesus into heaven and the "white choiring wings" might be those of angels, the detail of "Deity's young name" would seem to have a dual interpretation—on the one hand, referring to Crane's project of creating a new deific name (a "young name") or god-term for the modern world (love-as-bridgeship) and, on the other, referring to the classical male deity of love who was usually depicted as a young boy and was often also depicted as winged—Cupid or Amor, the son of Venus. The passage would thus continue Crane's practice of combining within a line or two allusions to a classical and a Christian figure (each associated with love) as historical antecedents for his creating a new figuration for love as part of a "secular . . . intrinsic Myth." The image of "choiring wings" taken with the earlier references in stanza 10 to "blinding cables" and "spiring cordage" would seem to evoke again "Atlantis"'s initial image of the bridge as a gigantic harp or lyre and recall the Platonic epigraph's association of music and love, but we should also note that the figure of Cupid traditionally carries another stringed instrument associated with love (a bow) and that, as love is blind, so Cupid is often depicted as being blindfolded when he fires his arrows.

Further, if the bridge's cables, seen in bright sunlight, are the referent of the image "pyramids / Of silver sequel," then the angle at which the cables ascend the monumental towers might well suggest the triangular shape of one face of a pyramid and thus suggest that the pyramids' immense longevity (as a figure of eternity or immortality) is what Crane proposes as an ideal for the bridge. But in choosing this image Crane seems also to have been playing on the etymology of the word *pyramid.* The *OED* gives two possible roots, the word being anciently explained as derived either from the Greek *pyr* meaning "fire" or *pyrus* meaning "wheat" or "grain, as if a granary" (*OED* 2:2376). The first derivation reflected the ancient understanding of the pyramid's shape as representing the tip of a flame (a belief Shelley alludes to in *The Revolt of Islam* when he speaks of "a pyramid like a sculptured flame").[2] A signifier of life because of its association with warmth, light, and movement, the flame shape made the pyramid (and the obelisk, a pyramid on a column) a typical ancient structure memorializing the dead, much as is signified in our era by an everlasting flame (such as that at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier). The *pyr* (fire) etymology of pyramid also resonates back to "Atlantis"'s stanza 4 and the image of the "smoking *pyres* of love and death" (italics mine).

The Egyptian pyramids with their points aimed toward the sky were also believed to be pathways by which the souls of the pharaohs entombed there traveled to their resting place among the constellations—the tip of the flame pointing the way upward toward those points of light in the sky that were really great fires—like thus aspiring to like. Earlier in *The Bridge,* Crane had combined the two possible roots of the word by associating the pyramid image with fire, the stellar translation of a soul, and the immortality of the eternally recurring grain's springtime resurrection from beneath the earth. In "The Dance," after Maquokeeta's immolation and his translation into the Morning Star, Crane imagines him keeping watch over the physical body of the land: "Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze . . . / And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize! // Totem and fire-gall, slumbering pyramid— / Though other calendars now stack the sky" (48). I take *fire-gall* to be a word of Crane's own making (since no dictionary seems to know it), a neologism perhaps influenced by the line in Hopkins's "The Windhover," where, in enumerating things that shine through a surface's abrasion, Hopkins ends with the image of logs in a fire: "and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear, / Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion" (69). One meaning of *gall* is to chafe or wear away and another is "a spot where the soil has been . . . exhausted" (*OED* 1:1106), so I take it that "fire-gall" refers to the aftereffects of a fire, either an Indian campfire or the fire in which Maquokeeta was consumed, or, given that the word occurs in the line immediately following the image of the "bride immortal in the maize," a burning back of the land to increase its fertility, like that burning back of the grapevines that Crane evokes in "Lachrymae Christi" when Dionysus's smile emerges from "charred and riven stakes" as the earth comes to life again in the spring. Significantly, that springtime resurrection of the vegetable world that Crane personifies in the figures of a Greek and a Christian dying-and-reviving god is also associated in "Lachrymae Christi" with the images of a pyramid and music: "And the nights opening / Chant pyramids,— / Anoint with innocence,—recall / To music and retrieve what perjuries / Had galvanized the eyes" (14).

If we are right in interpreting "Atlantis"'s lines "Deity's young name / Kinetic of white choiring wings . . . ascends" as referring both to the ascension of the Christian deity's second person and also to the Greek male god of love, Venus's son Cupid or Amor, as a winged youth, then this same pagan/Christian duality governs Crane's evocation of love in "Atlantis"'s stanza 11:

> Unspeakable Thou Bridge to Thee, O Love.
> Thy pardon for this history, whitest Flower,
> O Answerer of all,—Anemone,—
> Now while thy petals spend the suns about us, hold—
> (O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me)
> Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late! (74)

In asking love's "pardon for this history," Crane explicitly acknowledges his project in "Atlantis" of giving a brief history of love's figurations in Western

mythology and religion from ancient to modern times, a history meant to exhibit the persistence of certain emotions, narrative structures, and image complexes beneath the differing personifications, names, and stories used to depict love. Crane immediately continues this practice by designating the "whitest Flower" as the anemone. Crane knew the story of the anemone from Bulfinch or from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: how Venus, "playing one day with her boy Cupid, wounded her bosom with one of his arrows . . . Before it healed she beheld Adonis, and was captivated with him" (Bulfinch 58). Doting on the young man, Venus deserts her usual haunts to accompany Adonis in his favorite activity, hunting, but warns him that he must not hunt "the beasts that Nature has armed with weapons" (Bulfinch 58). One day when Adonis goes hunting by himself, he ignores Venus's warning and wounds a wild boar that turns on him and gores him in the thigh or groin. Venus, "in her swan-drawn chariot" (Bulfinch 58) coursing through the air, hears the groans of Adonis and goes to his aid, but by the time she reaches him, he is dead. Vowing that memorials of her grief "shall endure," Venus sprinkles nectar on Adonis's blood "and in an hour's time there sprang up a flower of bloody hue like that of the pomegranate. But it is short-lived. It is said the wind blows the blossoms open, and afterwards blows the petals away; so it is called Anemone, or Wind Flower, from the cause which assists equally in its production and its decay" (Bulfinch 59).

In Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (a book we know had special authority for Crane because of its importance for Eliot's *The Waste Land*), the fourth chapter is devoted to the cults of Tammuz and Adonis. Weston adds this further note to the story of Venus's grief for her beloved: "The goddess, in despair at his death, by her prayers won from Zeus the boon that Adonis be allowed to return to earth for a portion of each year, and henceforward the youthful god divides his time between the goddess of Hades, Persephone, and Aphrodite" (43). Weston points out that Adonis "was no mere favourite of a goddess" but a figure "with whose life and well-being the ordinary processes of Nature, whether animal or vegetable, were closely and intimately concerned" (Weston 43). Adonis was then "a divinity of vegetation and fertility, whose disappearance marks the harvesting of the crops, . . . akin to the Babylonian Tammuz . . . It was probably from Cyprus that his cult was carried, by the fifth century, to Athens, where he was, at least partially, identified with Eros. His cult existed only in conjunction with that of Aphrodite" (*Oxford* 8). Obliquely explaining "the nature of the injury" to the groin suffered by Adonis, Weston notes that "writers upon the subject are of one accord in considering the usual account to be but a euphemistic veiling of the truth" and that "the reason for this universal mourning" of Adonis "was the cessation, or suspension, by injury or death, of the reproductive energy of the god upon whose virile activity vegetable life directly, and human life indirectly, depended" (Weston 43–44). Observing that "in the ancient Aryan religion everything is aimed at the affirmation of life" and that "the phallus can be considered its dominant symbol," Weston makes clear the phallic character of the Adonis cult, adding that it "was customary for the priests of Adonis to mutilate themselves in imita-

tion of the god, a distinct proof, if one were needed, of the traditional cause of his death" (45, 48).

Given Crane's elaboration of the phallic aspect of the bridge throughout the poem, we can see the point of his addressing the bridge as "Anemone," thereby attaching to it the story of Adonis as a phallic, dying-and-reviving god. In making this connection, Crane also takes advantage of another aspect of the ancient Adonis cult's ritual as reported by Weston, an aspect that explains the concluding lines of "Atlantis"'s eleventh stanza. According to Weston,

> The elaborate ceremonies of mourning for the dead god, and committing his effigy to the waves, preceded the joyous celebration of his resurrection, but in Alexandria the sequence was otherwise; the feast began with the solemn and joyous celebration of the nuptials of Adonis and Aphrodite, at the conclusion of which a Head, of papyrus, representing the god, was, with every show of mourning, committed to the waves, and borne within seven days by a current (always counted upon at that season of the year) to Byblos, where it was received and welcomed with popular rejoicing. (Weston 47)

Weston continues, "The presence of water, either sea, or river, is an important feature in the Adonis cult, the effigy of the dead god being, not buried in the earth, but thrown into the water" (51). She adds in a note, "Throwing into, or drenching with, water is a well-known part of 'Fertility' ritual; it is a case of sympathetic magic, acting as a rain charm" (51, n. 31).

This ritual of the Adonis cult sheds light on those instances in *The Bridge* where a body jumps or is thrown into water, most significantly, when the body of the hobo Dan Midland is thrown into the Mississippi and drifts down to the Gulf in "The River," permitting the quester who has identified with the hobo to be imaginatively reborn into the Indian world of "The Dance." The casting of Midland's body into the river has been foreshadowed by the suicide of the "bedlamite" who leaps from the Bridge into the East River in stanza 5 of "To Brooklyn Bridge"; moreover, in its journey down the Mississippi, Midland's body had been accompanied by other bodies: "What are you, lost within this tideless spell? / You are your father's father, and the stream— / A liquid theme that floating niggers swell" (44). Whether these latter are bodies washed away in the river's flooding or simply swimmers, we have already discussed the anagrammatic transformation of the phrase "floating niggers" (and what it meant for Crane) into the phrase "floating singer" in the last line of "Atlantis"'s eleventh stanza. And we can now see that in annexing the figure of Adonis and his cult to the image of the bridge by invoking the "Anemone," Crane's plea "Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!" imagines a kind of rebirth from water reminiscent of the Adonis ritual.

Whether or not the ritual of casting an effigy of Adonis into the sea reflected the ancient sense that Adonis would be reborn from the same element from which his beloved Venus was originally born, we can see that for Crane the notion that the singer of *The Bridge* would ultimately be upborne from the water by the mythical island-continent of Atlantis (whose

ultimate rising from beneath the sea was part of a legend of the return of a golden age) paralleled the conclusion of his earlier poem "Voyages" in that each involved an island as destination of a journey, the image of the goddess of love, and the sense that the completion of the journey to the island represents the completion of the poem. In "Voyages" the island associated with the "lounged goddess" and her "unfolded floating dais" is Belle Isle, but Belle Isle is no sooner named than it is made to represent the "imaged Word . . . that holds / Hushed willows anchored in its glow." Note the way Crane self-consciously echoes the word *hold* from those lines in "Voyages" in "Atlantis"'s stanza eleven: "Now while thy petals spend the suns about us, hold— / (O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me) / Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!" The only part of the drowned poet (the "floating singer") that will survive is that portion of his consciousness that can be "anchored" in the "imaged Word" of the poem. Yet it is not just the repetition of the word *hold* that links the concluding structure of "Atlantis"'s eleventh stanza to that of "Voyages" but two other images as well. In "Voyages VI" the "lounged goddess when she rose" is associated with the image of "Creation's blithe and petalled word," and in "Atlantis" Crane makes clear the flower to which that "petalled word" belongs: "Anemone,— / Now while thy petals spend the suns about us." And again in "Voyages VI" "the imaged Word . . . holds" things "in its glow," while in "Atlantis" the island-continent and (thus the eponymous poem) holds "the floating singer" in its "radiance" ("O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me"), thus making, through the image of light in "glow" and "radiance," the expected association of love and logos (word) as in the beginning of John's Gospel.

The resemblance that Crane draws on in addressing the bridge as "Anemone" is a similarity in the relationship that both a suspension bridge and the flower have to the wind. Bulfinch gives the flower's name as deriving from the fact that "the wind blows the blossoms open, and afterwards blows the petals away; so it is called Anemone, or Wind Flower, from the cause which assists equally in its production and its decay." (Indeed, Bulfinch's sense of the wind as assisting both in the flower's production and decay cannot help but remind us, as it would have Crane, of Shelley's addressing the West Wind in his great ode as "destroyer and preserver.") Similarly, one of the things that called the suspension bridge into existence was the problem of wind, the problem that bridges above a certain height and length are in danger of being blown down. It is the suspension bridge's ability to move in the wind, incorporating the wind's stresses into its web of cables that leaves "Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,— / Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!"—so that in a sense the destroyer becomes the preserver.

We have seen the place the anemone holds in the Greek mythology of love, but, as we said earlier, the anemone, like a great many other images from the previous pagan religion, also found a place in Christian lore, becoming attached to Christianity's own dying-and-reviving god, a connection made on the basis of the flower's association with the dying-and-reviving Adonis. There is a species of wild anemone known as the pasque-

flower or pasch-flower that usually blooms in April around Easter and that, as one of the historical citations in the *OED* points out, received its name "from the Paschal solemnity of our Saviour's death" (1:80).

In "Atlantis"'s twelfth and final stanza, Crane begins with an image of the eternal stars that circles back to that of a lyre with which "Atlantis" began: "So to thine Everpresence, beyond time, / Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star / That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings, / Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge" (74). As we noted, the phrase "orphic strings" likens the lighted bridge to the constellation Lyra, Orpheus's lyre translated to the stars by Zeus at the poet/singer's death. (The phrase also calls to mind Emerson's idealized "Orphic poet" from the last part of *Nature.* The Orphic poet's words of prophetic wisdom [envisaging a new kind of American poetry] that Emerson quotes are, of course, Emerson's own, yet some years after the publication of *Nature* it seemed that Emerson's call for an American Orphic poetry had been answered with the appearance of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and the poetic tradition it initiated.) In the last stanza's second line, the image of "spears ensanguined of one tolling star" echoes the start of Maquokeeta's immolation in "The Dance" ("Spears and assemblies") and his spirit's translation into the Morning Star. In line 5 of the last stanza, Crane reemphasizes the symbolic equation of *The Bridge* and the bridge ("One Song, one Bridge of Fire!") and then in the next line and a half evokes Columbus and Whitman: "Is it Cathay, / Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring / The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?" (74)—the reference to Cathay echoing Columbus's words at the end of the first stanza of "Ave Maria"—"I bring you back Cathay!" (35)—and the reference to grass and rainbows picking up on imagery associated with Whitman in the final stanzas of "Cape Hatteras." The image of the serpent and eagle in the leaves echoes the last line of "The Dance" ("The serpent with the eagle in the boughs"), evoking the Quetzalcoatl imagery associated with Maquokeeta but also, since the bird/serpent pair are seen through the boughs and leaves of a tree, returning our attention to the stars—to the constellations Serpens and Aquila and perhaps as well to that starry figure we had associated earlier with the imagery of the Indian hunt, the constellation Sagittarius, the Archer, who carries a stringed instrument like that of the classical god of love, Cupid.

Clearly, Crane has structured "Atlantis" around various memory places among the stars—all within the context of a movement from the step-by-step, temporal narrative of mythology and history to the spatially simultaneous, visual arrangement of points of light in the night sky, a shift from earth to sky figuring the movement from time to eternity (the everpresence beyond time) but also signifying the continuing presence of the past in the contemporary world through the ancient names and lore associated with the eternally recurring star groups. "Atlantis" is, of course, the great weaving together of *The Bridge*'s themes, but what we should remember is that though "Atlantis" is the poem's last section, it was the first section begun (in 1923) after Crane had seen at Stieglitz's gallery an exhibit of photographs and paintings celebrating the fortieth anniversary of Brooklyn

Bridge. Thus though "Atlantis" serves as *The Bridge*'s conclusion for readers, it served Crane as a template for developing, within the poem's sections, the motifs, images, and stories that "Atlantis" would weave together as its culmination, a template that was continually being revised during the years Crane worked on *The Bridge* (even in the interval in 1930 between the publication of the Black Sun edition in Paris and the Liveright edition in New York, as Langdon Hammer has shown in his compelling analysis of the manuscripts of "Atlantis" [178–202]), so that for Crane, as for the quester, the poem's origin was always already both ahead of and behind them.

§ 25
Three Structures; the Visualization of the Womb Fantasy in *The Last Judgement*; the Transumptive Relationship

Looking back over the whole of *The Bridge,* we can see that the work was built around three distinct but interconnected structures: First, the Eliotic "mythical method"—the layering, beneath the narrative of a contemporary action, of one or more older narratives whose actions resemble in significant ways the contemporary one such that the resemblance and/or disparity between the two becomes an implicit commentary on the present state and possible future of the contemporary world. Second, the pictorial structure Crane proposed for his poem when, in his letter to Otto Kahn, he compared the relationship of the poem's individual sections to that of the Sistine paintings. And third, the psychological structure that is inevitably woven into any long-labored, major work by its author's emotional life and personal history, a structure influenced in Crane's case by his troubled relationship with his parents, his sexual orientation, his inability to hold a job, his alcoholism, and so on, a psychological structure that, as I argued earlier, evokes the quester's return to origin, and thus to original power, as a return to the womb on the son's own terms.

We noted earlier the connection between the mythical method and the pictorial structure: that Virgil's *Aeneid* and the paintings in the Sistine Chapel are, respectively, the verbal and visual gathering together of images of origin from the two great empires centered in Rome. This connection is acknowledged in the Sistine paintings by the presence of the Cumaean Sibyl among the Sibyls and Old Testament prophets depicted on the chapel's ceiling and by the presence of the boatman Charon ferrying souls into hell in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement,* not to mention the Raphael fresco (in the nearby Borgo stanza), with its detail of Aeneas fleeing the burning Troy accompanied by Anchises and Ascanius, a connection of the *Aeneid* to the Sistine paintings reinforced by Dante's use of Virgil as his guide in the *Inferno.* But we should note in this regard that Crane's continual invocation of constellations in *The Bridge* (besides being an allusion to their importance in the voyage narratives layered beneath his work and to the notion of stellar translation in ancient literature) is also a subtle evocation

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of one aspect of the poem's pictorial structure: a reference to the movement from a three-dimensional body to its two-dimensional outline considered as a figure of body transcendence, and thus to the notion of superimposing one two-dimensional image (such as a shadow or geometrical outline) upon another as a figure of the containment of one body within another (the goal of the womb fantasy). For, of course, the ancient constellations are traditionally depicted as two-dimensional, geometric schemata that are, in effect, transparent, allowing other objects to be seen through them, just as the modern constellation Pons Brooklyniensis allows other constellations to be seen through its openwork pattern of cables at night.

What we must now consider is the link between, on the one hand, the arrangement of the Sistine paintings and, on the other, the psychological structure at work in Crane's reading of those paintings as that reading influenced *The Bridge*'s shape. The Sistine paintings fall for our purposes into three distinct groupings: first, the paintings on the ceiling depicting among other things God dividing light from darkness, His creation of the Sun and Moon, His dividing the water from the land, the creation of man, the creation of woman, the sacrifice of Noah, and the Deluge—paintings showing the origin and the beginning of time; second, the two series of paintings running along the side walls and meeting on the two halves of the chapel's back wall that show moments from the lives of Moses and Jesus; and third, the painting of the Last Judgement on the wall directly behind the altar at the front of the chapel, showing time's ending in a return to origin. (This coincidence of beginning and end, while theologically correct, was also a function of the physical positioning of the painting itself, for the wall holding Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* had originally contained the beginning panels of each of the two series running along the side walls—the finding of Moses in the bulrushes on the left half of the wall as one faces the altar and the nativity of Jesus on the right half.) If, as this painting of the Last Judgement suggests, the end leads back to the origin, then time is circular, and the parallel lives on the side walls are models for negotiating that circular pathway.

As we noted earlier, Crane has structured the reader's progress through *The Bridge* as a circular journey by fashioning the poem's opening and closing sections as extended acts of naming, an apostrophizing of the bridge/*Bridge* in which the closing section represents an elucidation of the opening section's naming such that, though the place returned to is the same, the reader is changed, enlightened by his journey through the poem. But what would have been most psychologically appealing for Crane in the circular journey figured by the Sistine paintings (and thus have made the order of their arrangement seem an appropriate analogue for his poem) is the reversal in importance of the roles of the Father and Son that the paintings evoke. On the chapel's ceiling, God the Father is depicted in five separate scenes, in each of which he is shown as a muscular old man with a long grey beard. But in the painting of the Last Judgement, the Father is nowhere to be seen. Instead, the central focus of the painting is the Son and His mother, the Son with His right arm raised in judgement, His mother

nestled beneath His upraised arm. Given that the Son's size and physique seem almost gigantic, the mother's size looks diminished in comparison, suggesting a reversal of the proportions of a Madonna/Child grouping. The Son is depicted as a muscular young man with a slightly boyish face, a single piece of cloth covering part of his left shoulder and upper left arm and extending behind his back down the right side of his body and across his thighs to conceal his genitals, a piece of cloth vaguely reminiscent of swaddling clothes that adds to the infantile feeling of the Madonna-and-Child reversal in the grouping. (The cloth veiling the Son's genitals was a detail added later at a Pope's direction.)

The Son and His mother are placed in the upper center of the fresco within an ovoid outlined in blue and with the upper portion of their bodies set against a circular yellow background suggesting a burst of light (fig. 25.1). The outer edge of the blue ovoid is defined by the bodies of various saints, these and others of the saved forming an arch across the top of the fresco with the blue ovoid as its keystone. Extending down the sides of the fresco from the two ends of the arch-like pictorial structure at the top are two groups of bodies moving in opposite directions. On the viewer's left-hand side (the Son's right hand) are bodies rising from the grave and ascending to heaven, while on the viewer's right-hand side (the Son's left) the bodies of the damned descend to hell where Charon ferries them across the Styx in his boat and Minos waits to judge them (fig. 25.2).

This movement in opposite directions along the sides of the painting recalls the movement noted earlier in Cosimo Rosselli's painting of "The promulgation of the written law by Moses" on the chapel's left wall, a painting in which a series of events are depicted within its perspectival depth running from background to foreground on the left side and from foreground to background on the right. This movement also resembles that in the side panels of Rogier van der Weyden's *St. John Altarpiece,* which gives the sense of standing at the center of a circle and seeing events moving toward the viewer in the triptych's left-hand panel and away from the viewer in the right-hand panel. But the difference in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* is that the movement in opposite directions on the painting's two sides does not represent a movement from background to foreground or foreground to background—which is to say that perspectival depth is not used to array a series of events arranged temporally, from earlier to later or later to earlier. Rather, the movement here is almost entirely in the foreground, from down to up on the left side and from up to down on the right.

It is as if the circle of time had been tipped upward and flattened onto the picture plane rather than extending into its painted depth, there being no use for perspectival depth as a signifier of time in a painting depicting time's end. And indeed what the painting shows is a few rows of people on either side of the Son, all either moving forward or straining toward the picture plane to view the souls rising from the earth on the left and descending to hell on the right, all striving to be present because this is the General Judgement and every person who has ever lived must be there to

Figure 25.1. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Last Judgement,* detail of Christ and the Virgin, 1537–41. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photograph by Scala/Art Resource, NY.

be judged and to witness the justice of the Son's decisions. In the interstices between the various groups of individuals in the painting there is blue sky and here and there a cloud shape, but all these clouds are either in the foreground or moving in that direction, and the blue sky is empty of any activity taking place in its depth, as empty as the sky behind God the Father in Michelangelo's painting of the creation of man on the chapel's ceiling, the point at which human time began.

But whereas man issues from the hand of the Father in the ceiling painting as God extends his finger to touch Adam's, the imagery of the Last Judgement is not an obvious return to the Father (who is not depicted) but a mother-son reunion. And since Crane figures the return to origin in *The Bridge* as a return to the womb on the son's own terms, Crane's Sistine analogy may well have been suggested by a Freudian reading of the

Figure 25.2. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Last Judgement,* 1537–41. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photograph by Scala/Art Resource, NY.

mother-son reunion depicted in the *Last Judgement,* which is to say, by a reading that sees the mother and the Son contained within an ovoid shape at the center of a kind of pelvic arc with the two legs of the painting extending downward along its sides, the displacement of the Father having been subtly effected by the parallel lives depicted on the chapel's side walls. By as much as these parallel lives were understood to be linked in an Old Testament / New Testament relation of prefiguration and fulfillment, this is a transumptive relationship that reverses early and late, which is to say that though Moses and his Father God are historically earlier than Jesus, the sense that Jesus is the fulfillment and Moses the prefiguration gives Jesus priority of importance. In effect, it makes Jesus the end that is intended in the mind of God before there is even a human beginning, as illustrated by the ceiling panel in which the Father creates Adam by stretching out his right arm to touch Adam's outstretched finger while the Virgin and the infant Jesus rest encircled beneath the Father's left arm. (Of course, there would have actually been a temporal priority given to the life of Jesus in the selection of the side walls' episodes from the two parallel lives, the events in Jesus's life determining which events from Moses's life could serve a prefigurative purpose.) In John's Gospel, Jesus in his deific nature explicitly asserts his temporal priority to Moses. While teaching in the temple in Jerusalem, when he is questioned by the scribes and Pharisees, he tells them, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." To which they reply, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" And Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:56–58). Understanding that in using the phrase "I am" Jesus has assumed the name by which God identified himself when he appeared to Moses as a voice from the burning bush ("And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you," Exodus 3:14), the scribes and Pharisees take up rocks to stone Jesus, but he hides himself and goes out of the temple.

Given that Crane evokes the quester's interior journey in *The Bridge* as a symbolic return to origin that is structured as a womb fantasy, we should look again at the scenario of the quester's symbolic death and resurrection during his subway ride in "The Tunnel," where his search for original power involves a descent into a telluric womb. Recall that Aeneas is ultimately led to Cumae, the Sibyl, and the cavernous entrance to the underworld by following the oracle of Phoebus Apollo at Delos instructing the "sons of Dardanus" to return to their origin: "the land which bare you first from your parent stock shall welcome you back to her fruitful bosom. Seek out your ancient mother" (Virgil 1:355). And, of course, Aeneas's mother, Venus, enables this return by sending a pair of her doves to guide him to the golden bough that he needs for his descent. In the underworld Aeneas meets the shade of his father Anchises, and in a transumptive moment the father cedes his son priority of importance, giving him a vision of the future of Rome and of the Julian line descending from Aeneas's son Iulus, a vision that makes clear that Aeneas is the fulfillment, and his forebears

the prefiguration, of that destiny Phoebus Apollo had predicted when, after telling Aeneas to seek out his ancient mother, he had said, "There the house of Aeneas shall lord it over all lands, even his children's children and their race that shall be born of them" (Virgil 1:355), so that the son, Aeneas, becomes the father of a people and a nation. Similarly, in "The Tunnel" the quester has his own visionary encounter with a poetic father figure, Poe, who represents through his own fate a vision of the quester's possible destiny as an American poet. Confronting his fate, the quester is able to overcome his fear of death when the sight of the "Wop washerwoman" bringing "mother eyes and hands / Back home to children and to golden hair" gives him a glimpse of selfless mother love that recalls Helen's in Goethe's *Faust*.

Once this vision of the unselfish mother restores the quester's faith in the power of love, the imagery of the subway train's rising from the tunnel becomes that of rebirth, of hope sprung from the acceptance of death as part of life's renewal—the sense of tragic joyfulness that Nietzsche expounded in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In his most Nietzschean poem "Lachrymae Christi," Crane images this natural transformation from death back into life as the action of worms and grapevines: "While chime / Beneath and all around / Distilling clemencies,—worms' / Inaudible whistle, tunneling / Not penitence / But song, as these / Perpetual fountains, vines,—" (14). And that image of worms' tunneling (by which dead matter again becomes part again of living organisms) casts light on the imagery of the subway train rising to the surface from beneath the East River. In "Quaker Hill," the poem leading into "The Tunnel," the quester asks, "So, must we from the hawk's far stemming view, / Must we descend as worm's eye to construe / Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate / As humbly as a guest who knows himself too late, / His news already told?" (65–66). The rising subway train is evoked as if it were a gigantic worm that had consumed the quester, reducing his body to primordial ooze from which he is reborn to begin again the round of life, death, and rebirth. (In a May 1924 letter to his mother, Crane had said that the "strings of light" crossing the Brooklyn Bridge were "like glowing worms as the Ls and the surface cars pass each other going and coming" [387].) Addressing the train as the "daemon," the quester describes its sound as "the muffled slaughter of a day in birth": "O cruelly to innoculate the brinking dawn / With antennae toward worlds that glow and sink;— / To spoon us out more liquid than the dim / Locution of the eldest star, and pack / The conscience navelled in the plunging wind, / Umbilical to call—and straightway die!" (70). In the next stanza, Crane implicitly evokes the connection between this Nietzschean notion of natural resurrection and religion's dream of the self's personal resurrection (evokes the former as the original natural process that materially underlay the latter hope) when he describes the quester's feeling as the subway car resurfaces: "And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope, / The sod and billow breaking,—lifting ground, / —A sound of waters bending astride the sky / Unceasing with some Word that will not die" (70).

If Crane evokes the subway train on its underground journey as being

like a worm burrowing beneath the earth transforming dead bodies back into living matter, then the train-worm image is another instance of the serpent half of that bird-serpent figuration running throughout the poem. In the "Van Winkle" section, Crane had originally hinted at this conjunction of bird and serpent in a memory of childhood: "Remember, remember / The cinder pile at the end of the backyard / Where we stoned the family of young / Garter snakes under . . . And the monoplanes / We launched—with paper wings and twisted / Rubber bands" (40). The "Van Winkle" section ends with the quester boarding a subway train that, in the next section, "The River," metamorphoses into the mechanical serpent-train that carries the quester westward to the Mississippi. In this journey the physical body of the land is evoked as an as-yet-unnamed Indian maiden associated with both eagle and serpent: "Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair" (43).

Here too the poetic quester's entrance into the land involves a symbolic death, his identifying himself with the hobo Dan Midland, whose corpse is thrown into the river. In "The Tunnel," after having described "subways, rivered under streets / and rivers" (68), the quester, who is traveling to Brooklyn and thus passing under the East River, evokes the death-like aspect of his underground journey through the names of real locations and subway stops: "For Gravesend Manor change at Chambers Street. / The platform hurries along to a dead stop" (69). Gravesend, an area in south central Brooklyn, is one of the oldest parts of the borough; the name's use here alludes to the fact that the historical Pocahontas, who died when she accompanied her husband John Rolfe back to England, is buried in Gravesend, Kent. Similarly, Chambers Street in lower Manhattan, though still a stop at which one changes for Brooklyn-bound trains, contains in the word *chambers* its own allusion to the world of the dead. Recall that in "To Brooklyn Bridge" a bedlamite, "*Out of some subway scuttle,*" rushes to the bridge and jumps off. Crane's comment on the suicide, "*A jest falls from the* speechless caravan" (33, emphasis mine), clearly alludes to the concluding imagery of the most famous nineteenth-century American poem about death, William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis," lines that also establish the deathly association of "chambers": "The *innumerable caravan,* which moves / To that mysterious realm, where each shall take / His *chamber* in the silent halls of death" (23, italics mine).[1] Though we should not discount the possibility that Bryant's use of the word *chamber* in this connection may well be mediating for Crane another, more contemporary poet's association of the word with death in the ending of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown / Till human voices wake us and we drown" (*Complete* 7).

If the train in "The River" is the modern, mechanical version of the serpent, then the airplane in "Cape Hatteras" fills that role for the eagle. And the lines from "Quaker Hill" conjoining the images of "the Hawk's far-stemming view" and the "worm's eye" prepare us for the subtle evocation of a bird's flight that precedes the figuration of the train as a worm in

"The Tunnel": as the train gains speed, the quester in the subway car sees "toward corners of the floor / Newspapers wing, revolve and wing" (70). (In "Van Winkle" the flight of the children's monoplanes had been evoked in the image of "paper wings.") Given that a train entering a tunnel is a common enough image to suggest intercourse (particularly in the early days of film), the quester's entrance into the tunnel on board the subway train (his descent into the womb of mother earth and his imaginary reduction to a sperm-like liquid before being reborn) points to this structure's psychological significance as a figure of the son's effort to achieve imaginative priority to the father through an original relationship to the mother. And that effort culminates in "Atlantis" with the almost subliminal emergence of the figures of Venus, her son Cupid, and her lover Adonis.

As Crane moves from the evocation of the goddess of love in stanza 9 of "Atlantis" to that of her son Cupid in stanza 10 and then on to the evocation of her lover Adonis in stanza 11, he creates (using that same lateral foreshadowing discussed earlier, by which he built up, through the superposition of images, the composite figure of virgin-mother-lover) a further composite figure of god-son-lover. Not only was Venus's son Cupid a god but, as Weston points out, after Adonis's death Venus "won from Zeus the boon that Adonis be allowed to return to earth for a portion of each year" (Weston 43), making Adonis in effect a seasonal dying-and-reviving god. Recall as well that Bulfinch locates the origin of Venus's love for Adonis in the goddess's playing one day with Cupid and accidentally wounding herself with one of his arrows. Grounded in ancient myth, the composite figure of god-son-lover evoked in these stanzas is clearly one with which Crane identifies his alter ego, the quester—and not unexpectedly so, for the quester has already been associated with Aeneas, and Aeneas's mother, Venus, also gained for this her human son the gift of deification at the end of his life.

Given that Pater in his essay on Botticelli assimilates the artist's representations of Venus and the Madonna and given both the Christic and classical resonances of the imagery in "Atlantis"'s stanzas 10 and 11, the relationship of Crane's god-son-lover to Venus could easily be seen as resembling that of God the Son to the Madonna in Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. At the end of "Atlantis," the movement is from the image in stanza 11 of the poet (contained and sustained in the poem called "Atlantis" like a "floating singer" buoyed up by the rising of the island-continent) to the image of a stellar translation in stanza 12 (where the bridge's lighted cables are evoked as "orphic strings" and "sidereal phalanxes" [74]), a movement implicitly associating the quester both with the ancient singer Orpheus (a Christ-figure in the Renaissance because he had descended to the underworld and returned) and with the Emersonian Neoplatonic "Orphic poet" Whitman and his poetic descendants. Which is to say, a movement (a rising from the sea and into the heavens) that figures an imaginary stellar translation of the quester, a trajectory from sea to sky that resonates in the goddess of love's birth from the sea (as well as in the cult ritual of her lover Adonis being reborn from the sea that Weston examines) and in that

translation to the heavens of the several figures (Astraea, Demeter, Korē, the Virgin Mary) associated with the constellation Virgo, as well as that of Maquokeeta's soul into the Morning Star evoked in the next to last line of stanza 12.

§ 26
Michelangelo's Self-Portrait; Marsyas and the Suffering Artist

We began this examination of *The Bridge* by focusing on Crane's 1927 statement to Otto Kahn comparing the relationship among the poem's sections to that of the Sistine paintings. We might well wonder at this point what had originally attracted Crane's attention to these paintings as an analogue for an epic of American myth and history that offered a prophetic vision of the country's future. More than likely it was an article that appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* for Sunday, July 12, 1925, entitled "Hidden Michael Angelo Portrait Found." Written by F. L. Minnigerode and datelined Rome, the article focused on a detail from Michelangelo's own visionary painting of the future in the Sistine Chapel. Minnigerode, a retired army colonel and European representative of the *New York Times Sunday Magazine,* reports that "Professor La Cava of the University of Rome" has found "a portrait of the painter himself" on "one of the countless faces in Michael Angelo's painting of 'The Last Judgment'" (11). Pointing out that in this work Michelangelo "painted faces that were familiar to him," such as "his sharp critic, . . . Messer Biagio, Master of Ceremonies to Pope Paul," whose face was placed "upon a figure in the lowest depths of hell with a serpent twined around," Minnigerode reports that Professor La Cava has discovered the painter's face not "upon the broad shoulders of one of his stalwart figures" in the fresco but painted "in some obscurity" on "the skin of Saint Bartholomew" (fig. 26.1): "This skin is held in the hand of the saint who apparently has shed, with his skin, all iniquity and now stands white and serene in the great company of Saints. But the thing does not end here. On the new face of Saint Bartholomew he has painted a likeness of Aretino, who was his bitter enemy and persecutor. And he has made of Aretino a proud and unsaintlike-looking person" (11).

Minnigerode continues that "the face within the folds of the skin—the face which Professor La Cava declares unequivocally to be the face of Michael Angelo" is one in which "the great master . . . shows all the torment and sorrow and suffering that his enemy was supposed to have caused him . . . We know that while in Rome he was the victim of jealousy, poverty, misery and continual and threatening doubt. We know that he was often hungry, always persecuted and always unhappy" (11). Remarking that "the head is not a finished painting, it is too deep in the shadows; it is more a sketch with the face of the artist portrayed by a few lines," Minnigerode goes on to quote an unnamed Italian critic: "This is more than a self-portrait; it is a symbol and a revelation. Michael Angelo depicts him-

translation to the heavens of the several figures (Astraea, Demeter, Korē, the Virgin Mary) associated with the constellation Virgo, as well as that of Maquokeeta's soul into the Morning Star evoked in the next to last line of stanza 12.

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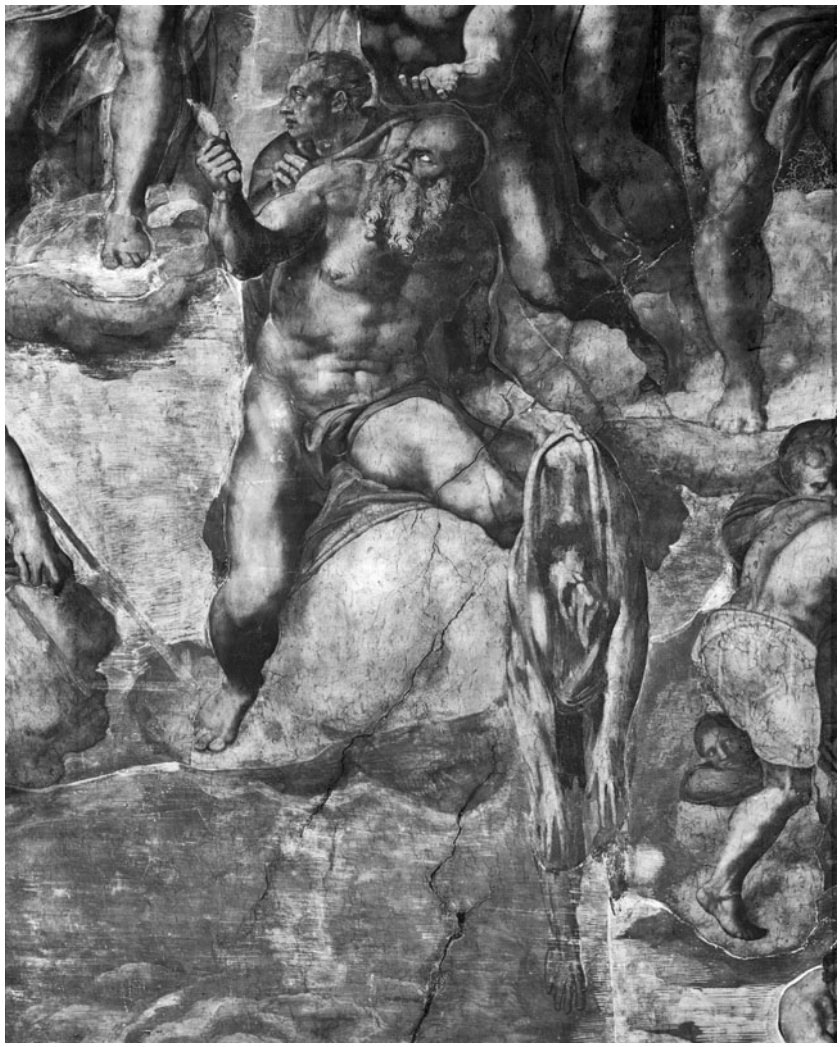

Figure 26.1. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Last Judgement,* detail of Saint Bartholomew, 1537–41. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican. Photograph by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

self as a second Saint Bartholomew, a martyr" (11). Minnigerode notes that "if this is, indeed, a self-portrait . . . the likeness more nearly approached the picture of Michael Angelo painted by Jacopo dal Ponte than any other portrait of the master," and he cites another unnamed critic to the effect that in the face on the skin "one recognizes the deep, dark, mournful eyes, the harsh, drawn features, the countenance seared with suffering," adding that "St. Bartholomew, holding a knife in one hand and in the other the terrible and bloodstained remnants of his own skin," has been placed in a group of "saints with the signs of their martyrdom, St. Andrew with the cross, St. Catharine, St. Lawrence" (11). Minnigerode concludes the article by observing that if Professor La Cava is right, "it is very strange that the most studied picture in the world, a fresco that has been carefully gone over by the greatest artists, critics and connoisseurs for four centuries, has never

before yielded this secret. Is it possible that when the fresco was fresher than it is today the likeness was not so striking as Professor La Cava believes it to be today?" (11).

We can be fairly sure that among Crane's set of friends, most of whom were writers or visual artists, the news of a Michelangelo self-portrait being discovered on the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew would have been widely discussed. And certainly the news of such a discovery would have had special interest for Crane for a variety of reasons. First of all, Minnigerode's description of the face on the skin characterizes it as that of the suffering artist: "there is agony about the face." As the unnamed Italian critic notes, "when one recalls the conditions under which the picture was done, the manner in which the artist lived and worked during the years spent over the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, one understands better the frame of mind in which the portrait was painted" (11). We can judge from Crane's correspondence during the seven years he worked on *The Bridge* just how much the description of Michelangelo's enduring "poverty, misery and continual and threatening doubt" during the completion of his years-long work would have struck a responsive chord, echoing Crane's sense of his own condition at that time. Moreover, the image of the suffering artist, of the artist-as-martyr, had great appeal for Crane, to judge from the number of figures in his poems that share this image: from the "black man in a cellar" in "Black Tambourine" to Charlie Chaplin's little tramp in "Chaplinesque" to the suffering gods Dionysus and Jesus in "Lachrymae Christi," and on to the suffering Petrushka and the decapitated Holofernes and John the Baptist in "Wine Menagerie" (in a March 1924 letter to his mother Crane said that he expected "to be beheaded very neatly" in her "next letter" for his failure to send his letter by special delivery [379]) and then to the martyr St. Erasmus in the third section of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," and finally to the figure of Maquokeeta, with whom the quester identifies himself in "The Dance," a figure shot full of arrows à la St. Sebastian and then burned at the stake.

One can account for Crane's attraction to this imagery not simply as a Shelleyesque figuration of the poet ("I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" from "Ode to the West Wind"), but also as springing from a masochistic component in Crane's own sexual orientation, an orientation he shared with Michelangelo. It seems clear, from Crane's correspondence and from his lengthy, frank conversations about his sexual preference with his friend, the practicing lay analyst Solomon Grunberg, that Crane was familiar with Freud's theories. And thus, as we noted earlier, one work whose contents he was surely aware of was the 1910 essay "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," in which Freud theorizes one origin of male homosexuality by analyzing a childhood memory recorded by the artist. Introducing the concept of narcissism to account for the object-choice in the cases of male homosexuals he has treated, Freud says that these

> subjects had had a very intense erotic attachment to a female person, as a rule their mother, during the first period of childhood, which is afterwards forgot-

> ten; this attachment was evoked or encouraged by too much tenderness on the part of the mother herself, and further reinforced by the small part played by the father during their childhood . . . After this preliminary stage a transformation sets in . . . The child's love for his mother cannot continue to develop consciously any further . . . The boy represses his love for his mother: he puts himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love . . . What he has in fact done is to slip back into auto-erotism: for the boys whom he now loves as he grows up are after all only substitutive figures and revivals of himself in childhood—boys whom he loves in the way in which his mother loved *him* when he was a child. He finds the objects of his love along the path of *narcissism,* as we say; for Narcissus, according to Greek legend, was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else. (Freud 11:99–100)

Freud's conclusion that the unsatisfied mother takes "her little son in place of her husband, and by the too early maturing of his erotism" robs "him of a part of his masculinity" (Freud 11:117) must have seemed to Crane a painfully accurate description of his own relationship with Grace. In a July 10, 1925, letter to his mother, Crane, commenting on an acquaintance whose marriage was breaking up, remarked that if the husband hadn't had "such a mother complex I doubt if there would have been any trouble" (Lewis, *Letters* 428). As we recall, Crane's biographer Unterecker noted Crane's "growing conviction" in the latter years of the 1920s that "his mother's love for him" had become "a brutal possessiveness" (540). And in a November 1928 letter to his mother's sister-in-law Zell Deming, Crane acknowledged that though his mother was "profoundly attached" to him, there were "mixtures of elements in this attachment" that were good neither for Grace nor for him (Unterecker 565).

Given that Freud's most extensive statement on the origin of male homosexuality had been his study of an Italian Renaissance painter and given that Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* would have presented Crane with, in effect, an apotheosized version of an infantile womb fantasy painted by another Italian Renaissance painter who shared the same sexual orientation as da Vinci and himself, Crane might well have sensed that the placing of Michelangelo's self-portrait on the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew was an element whose full significance could only be understood in relation to the mother/son pairing at the painting's center. That is to say, it could only be understood in light of the possessive mother-son relationship that Freud theorizes as the origin of male homosexuality. Certainly, Michelangelo's placing of his self-portrait on a martyred apostle in heaven suggests the sort of narcissism Freud identifies as the core of male homosexuality, as if Michelangelo gazing at his painted portrait were Narcissus staring at his reflected image in the pool.

Earlier we noted the ghost image of Narcissus that lurks within the scenario of Maquokeeta (as an "eye in the sky") watching as Pocahontas is possessed by the white men, noted the way this mirrors for the quester his own image as he watched Maquokeeta possess Pocahontas in the rain-

storm. Moreover, the fact that Michelangelo's self-portrait is painted on a flayed skin, a disembodied outer covering, recalls that structure of moving from a three-dimensional body to its two-dimensional outline that we saw in Goethe's *Faust,* a structure figuring the transcendence of bodily limitations as Helen's body vanishes, leaving Faust holding only her garments (her body's outer covering), which turn into a misty cloud, surround Faust's body, and bear it off toward a gigantic woman's shape on the horizon. Earlier we interpreted this structure as signifying a fantasized solution to the problem of incorporating an adult body into the womb, a solution that signifies "containment" as the superimposition of one two-dimensional image within or upon another. In light of this, one cannot help but be struck by Michelangelo's placement of the flayed skin (bearing his narcissistic self-portrait) adjacent to the mother-son reunion that is contained within the blue ovoid shape, the same color Columbus invokes as a sign of the Blessed Mother's assistance in returning home: "O Madre Maria, still / One ship of those thou grantest safe returning; / assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue" (35–36)—Mary's mantle, Helen's garment.

But what sort of things could Crane, given his own sexual preference and his close and often anguished relationship with his mother, have seen in Michelangelo's self-portrait vis-à-vis the fresco's central mother-son reunion? Part of the answer to this question depends on how one interprets "the grotesquely distorted features" of the face on the flayed skin (Posèq 3). Noting that besides being "seen as an expression of self directed irony" conveying "the mature artist's ideological disillusionment," the art critic A. W. G. Posèq argues that it may convey "the latent recollection of previous injuries, especially the early privation of parental love" (3). Posèq points out that "traumatic childhood experiences are believed to have been a decisive factor in Michelangelo's behavioural patterns, including his pleasure in punishment and his attraction to young men, particularly Tommaso Cavalieri, which he experienced as an inner torment. The flayed skin motif has a counterpart in a sonnet dedicated to Cavalieri, where, alluding to the humanistic exaltation of love which describes the lover as a victim of the beloved, Michelangelo says that for the young Cavalieri he is willing to shed his 'hairy pelt.'" Posèq speculates that since Michelangelo "never came to terms with his libido and repeatedly denied the sensual aspect of his attraction to young men, the agonized self-portrait could perhaps be seen as a rebuttal of his homosexual propensity or even as a symbolic self-punishment for not being able to liberate himself from it. In verses addressed to Vittoria Colonna, his spiritual mentor, he says that although he 'changed his skin toward the end, he could not change his old habits'" (3).

There was, of course, a classical substratum to the figure of the flayed St. Bartholomew, a substratum that evoked the image of an artist's suffering for his art, which would have appealed to Michelangelo: the myth of the flute-playing satyr Marsyas, who presumptuously challenged the god Apollo to a contest to see which was the better musician, was defeated, and ordered by Apollo to be flayed alive (Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* Book 6). Posèq points out that Michelangelo had studied "a Roman copy" of a statue

of "the tortured *Marsyas* restored by Donatello," that he knew Raphael's fresco of the "*Punishment of Marsyas* in the Stanza della Segnatura," and that "he was also familiar with the verse in Dante where the poet declares his willingness to undergo the satyr's torture so that his verse may reach the reality of the visible. Michelangelo's own experience taught him that artistic excellence is achieved at the price of suffering, identifying with Dante's plea he may have adopted the flaying as a visual metaphor of his creative torment" (Posèq 3–4). And as Robert Liebert argues in his psychoanalytic study of Michelangelo's art, the choice of "Saint Bartholomew rather than any other martyr" as the bearer of the artist's self-portrait "primarily hinged on his particular form of martyrdom—flaying—which provided the bridge to the persona who really engaged Michelangelo's fantasy, the satyr Marsyas" (355).

What we know of Michelangelo's childhood sheds light on some of the elements depicted in his *Last Judgement*. The second child of Ludovico and Francesca Buonarroti, Michelangelo was born in 1475 in the Tuscan village of Caprese, southwest of Florence, and as an infant he was placed with a wet nurse on a Buonarroti farm in the village of Settignano near Florence. As Michelangelo's biographer Condivi records, since the wet nurse was "the daughter of a stonemason and also married to a stonemason," Michelangelo would often say "perhaps facetiously or perhaps even in earnest, that it is no wonder that the chisel has given him so much gratification, for it is known that the nurse's milk is so powerful in us" (quoted in Liebert 13). The young Michelangelo would have remained with the wet nurse and her family until he was weaned (though probably not past the age of two) and then returned to his father and mother. But when Michelangelo was six, his mother died, and he seems to have gone back to live with his wet nurse's family. When he was ten, he rejoined his father and the rest of his family when his father remarried. As Richard and Edith Sterba argue in their reading of Michelangelo's art,

> the relationship between mother and child fascinated the great sculptor throughout his life and . . . he laboured over it continuously. At the age of 17, he sculpted his first Madonna and Child, called the "Madonna of the Stairs." He created four more Madonnas with Child in the next thirteen years. He took up the theme again at the age of 59, when he made the Medici Madonna. In the meantime he painted the famous ceiling of the Sistina, in which he represented eighteen times a mother with a child under 6 years. His three famous Pietàs are variations on the same theme. (Sterba and Sterba 326)

As of course is the mother-son reunion at the center of the *Last Judgement*, except that there, instead of the child seeking nourishment at the mother's breast or solace and protection at the mother's knee or a final resting place in the mother's lap, the mother (reduced in size compared to the son) is sheltered beneath the Son's upraised right arm.

But the question is: to which mother-figure would Michelangelo have felt the greater attachment—his own natural mother or that wet nurse of his earliest years, the daughter and wife of stonemasons, whose milk, he

seemed to think, had determined his life's work as sculptor and artist? We know that early on Michelangelo was in conflict with his father over the boy's choice of a career. As the Sterbas note, "When he was 12 he declared that he wanted to become an artist and sculptor. This upset his father very much; to him sculptors were merely a kind of stonecutters—as they were probably for Michelangelo also—and no Buonarrotti should become a labourer and artisan. He tried to drive the idea out of the son's mind by beating . . . But the little fellow was stubborn and insistent, and the father had to give in. He was put into the workshop of the Ghirlandaio brothers for three years" (326). One cannot help but be reminded of the way Hart Crane's father, the successful businessman, continually disparaged, during Hart's teens and early twenties, his son's decision to become a poet, attempting to dissuade Hart on the grounds that poets never earned their own living and were, in effect, no better than bums, and that by becoming a poet Hart would condemn himself to an artistic demimonde well below the social class into which he had been born.

As the Sterbas point out, in Michelangelo's later life, "He felt really at home only among stone-cutters and labourers, and again and again sought out situations in which he could live among them . . . In his living habits he constantly restored the poor and crowded conditions of the family with whom he spent his early days. He lived like a pauper, although he became a man of considerable means, and let his father and brothers enjoy his earnings" (326). We know that Michelangelo's relationship with his father was more or less stormy throughout the father's lifetime and that later in the father's life his son was his main financial support. Michelangelo's seeking out the company of stonecutters and laborers in later life may have been due to childhood experiences that made him feel really at home only in their company, but it may also have been a way of emphasizing that it was precisely from manual labor, from the physical work of that class of artisans which Michelangelo's father had disparaged as being socially beneath the Buonarrotis, that the father was now being supported, the forbidden artistic work having psychologically bested the father by making him the son's economic dependant. Again one cannot help but notice the similarity here with Crane's relationship to his father: Hart took his father's claim that poets, in effect, were bums and then created in his poetry that recurring and ultimately triumphant figure of the son-poet-slave, that figure he elaborates through those of the Aesop-like "black man, forlorn in the cellar" in "Black Tambourine," the "hobo-trekkers" behind his father's "cannery works" near the start of "The River," and the black singer near "The River"'s end. Not, of course, that Crane ended up financially supporting his father as Michelangelo did, but that, as we saw, the elder Crane toward the end of his life when he and Hart had become reconciled seemed to allow, given the downward trajectory of his own business career at that point, that in the choice between business and art, his son had chosen the better part.

All of which brings us back to the question: What sort of things could Crane have seen in the relationship between the mother-son reunion at

the center of *The Last Judgement* and the artist's self-portrait on the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew in close proximity to it? First, one notes that the absence of any depiction of God the Father as part of *The Last Judgement*'s mother-son reunion is emphasized by the way the Virgin's pose (sheltered, as it were, beneath the Son's upraised right arm) recalls and contrasts with Michelangelo's depiction of the Virgin and Child sheltered within the encircling left arm of the Father in the ceiling panel showing Adam's creation. This transumptive displacement of God the Father by God the Son, considered as a depiction of the son's ideal of achieving priority of access to original power (the matrix), must be balanced against the oddity of Michelangelo's self-portrait, an oddity due in part to the fact that St. Bartholomew is shown both with and without his skin. In the fresco the saint has been painted with his skin restored to its proper place on the surface of his body (as befits the promises of the general resurrection), while simultaneously holding in his left hand his flayed skin and in his right the knife used for the flaying (the instrument of his martyrdom). At the same time, he looks backward over his right shoulder, his line of sight intersecting the figure of the Virgin. And, of course, there is the further oddity that St. Bartholomew's face and that on his flayed skin are the faces of two different people.

In his article, Minnigerode noted La Cava's identification of St. Bartholomew's face as that of Michelangelo's "bitter enemy and persecutor" Aretino; certainly, enmity and persecution is a plausible way of characterizing the relationship between the figure holding the knife and the person whose flayed skin he holds. But what one also notices about the difference in the two faces is that the figure holding the knife has a long, flowing, grey beard and a mostly bald head, whereas the face on the skin has no beard and there is a full head of black hair—with the result that the former figure looks older than the latter. It seems not too great a leap to suggest that if Crane had seen the male/female pair at the fresco's center as evoking the son's idealized goal of a mother-son reunion on the son's own terms, then he could have equally seen the male/male pair of St. Bartholomew and the flayed skin set in close proximity to the former as evoking the principal obstacle or threat to that idealized goal—the older figure with the knife suggesting the castrating father and the flayed skin the castrated son. So, although a representation of God the Father has been displaced by that of the triumphant Son in the painting, a threatening father-figure still lurks nearby. If we accept the notion that Michelangelo's self-portrait on the flayed skin is meant to evoke the suffering an artist endures in order to practice his art, then we can see that some of this type of suffering was initially experienced by both Michelangelo and Crane at the hands of their respective fathers—though in both cases the paternal interdiction was directed not against the artist's feelings toward his real mother but rather toward the artist's dark mother or muse, his art. Yet we should add that in Crane's case his mother had been the major fostering force for his artistic ambitions during his childhood and youth.

That the figure of St. Bartholomew could be read as a veiled father

figure is suggested by two considerations. First, where the figure of the Son in the painting's center is beardless, as is apparently the face on the flayed skin, the figure of St. Bartholomew holding the knife has a long grey beard, as does the figure of God the Father in all Michelangelo's depictions of Him on the ceiling. Second, though Professor La Cava identified the features of St. Bartholomew as being those of Michelangelo's "bitter enemy and persecutor" Aretino, it has also been argued that the saint is a portrait of Pope Paul III, the pontiff who had assigned Michelangelo to paint *The Last Judgement*, had issued an edict releasing him from his contract to sculpt the figures for Pope Julius II's tomb until *The Last Judgement* was finished, and had driven the artist so relentlessly to complete the fresco that Michelangelo "felt rather like the captive of a despotic potentate" (Posèq 8–9). As Posèq notes, Michelangelo

> seems to have taken a sarcastic revenge for his frustration by depicting himself as the victim of his august patron whom he represented in St. Bartholomew. The baldness of the bearded Apostle, who traditionally should have had crisp black hair, evokes the closely cropped crane and distinctive long beard of Paul III in a famous portrait by Titian . . . To a modern viewer the ironic content of the image is not immediately evident, but the contemporaries recognizing Paul III in the athletic St. Bartholomew would hardly miss the more explicit allusion to the ordeal of Marsyas in Michelangelo's self-portrait. (9)

If, as Posèq contends, Michelangelo's self-portrait on the flayed skin and Pope Paul III's face on St. Bartholomew are meant to represent the Marsyas-like suffering artist and the Holy Father as "despotic potentate," respectively, then it would be only understandable if a sensitive viewer like Crane, given his own psychological history, were to comprehend in Michelangelo's depiction of St. Bartholomew a threatening father figure holding the skin of a suffering artist-son—in effect, a figuration of the principal obstacle to that ideal of a mother-son reunion at the fresco's center. Given that the image of St. Bartholomew is on the Son's left-hand side (the knife in the saint's upraised right hand almost touches the calf of the Son's bended left leg) and given that this sinister side of the fresco contains farther down the wall the damned souls descending into hell, St. Bartholomew's placement could be read as a subtle condemnation of the inimical figure evoked here as the artist's persecutor. Posèq has also pointed out that since the figure of the flayed satyr Marsyas lies behind Michelangelo's rendering of St. Bartholomew's martyrdom, Michelangelo may well have been aware of "a literary tradition transmitted by Aristides Quintilianus (3rd or 4th century A.D.)" to the effect that "Apollo forced Marsyas to lead the souls of the dead into the underworld" (Posèq 3), in which case the flayed satyr punished for his presumptuousness in matching his musicianship with that of a god would represent the suffering of any great artist who aspired to a godlike creativity in his craft.

A final question arises as to whether there is more than one way of reading the mother/son pairing at the fresco's center. We have read it as symbolizing for Crane a return to origin on the son's own terms, a return

that grants the son original power and a transumptive priority to the father in possessing the matrix, and we have read the figure that lies behind the Virgin Mary in Crane's poem as being the dark mother as muse, either the Indian maiden Pocahontas or Venus, the classical goddess of love. In this regard we noted the way that the image of Venus (with her son Cupid and her lover Adonis) subtly emerges in the final stanzas of "Atlantis" as if to balance the image of the Virgin Mary in the opening section "To Brooklyn Bridge." And just as the classical figure of Marsyas lies behind Michelangelo's treatment of the flayed St. Bartholomew, so Liebert cites Tolnay's observation about *The Last Judgement* that "the form and position of the Virgin" at the fresco's center "are largely modeled on the ancient prototype of the 'crouching Venus'" (Liebert 355), which is to say, the figure of Venus playing with her son Cupid. So for both Michelangelo and Crane the image of the Virgin Mary has within it that of the ancient goddess of love and thus evokes the triple archetype of virgin-mother-lover. But consider again Freud's contention in his essay on Leonardo that a son, who has suffered a "too early maturing of his erotism" due to "too much tenderness on the part of the mother" at an early age, "represses his love for his mother" as he grows older, "identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love . . . , boys whom he loves in the way in which his mother loved him as a child" (Freud 11:99–100). Which suggests that the mother-son pairing at the fresco's center, besides representing the son's fantasy of an exclusive possession of the mother, may evoke as well his fantasy of a total identification with the muse-mother.

In either case, there can be no doubt that the kinds of issues raised by the proximity of the fresco's mother-son reunion and the threatening figure with a knife holding the flayed skin bearing the artist's self-portrait would have suggested a psychological drama being played out in Michelangelo's representations of father, mother, and son in the Sistine paintings, a drama Crane would have recognized and identified with and that would thus have suggested Michelangelo's masterworks on the Sistine ceiling and altar wall as appropriate analogues for *The Bridge*'s sections being thought of as each "a separate canvas," as he told Otto Kahn, "yet none" yielding "its entire significance when seen apart from the others."

§ 1
"Legend," "Black Tambourine," "Emblems of Conduct," "My Grandmother's Love Letters," "Sunday Morning Apples"

Most of Hart Crane's short and middle-length poems—those in *White Buildings,* the *Key West* sheaf, the uncollected poems, and his last completed piece "The Broken Tower"—are related in one way or another to *The Bridge.* These poems fall into several distinct groups: those that were written while Crane was working on his epic and thus involve some of the same material but that were always intended to be published separately from *The Bridge* ("Repose of Rivers," "Lachrymae Christi," "The Wine Menagerie," and "Recitative"); those written during the composition of *The Bridge* and that Crane may have intended to be part of his epic but were not included in the published version, either because they were never finished or because something else took their place ("To Liberty"); poems written before he began work on *The Bridge* that contain structures or images that recur, are developed, or inflected in his epic ("Black Tambourine," "My Grandmother's Love Letters," and "Chaplinesque"); and those written after *The Bridge* was completed that represent an attempt either to extend, or to strike out in a new direction from, the themes and images in his long poem.

One source of difficulty in Crane's shorter poems is the radical demands made on the reader's imagination by his poetics: the "logic of metaphor" and its "dynamics of inferential mention," a poetic practice that depends on "the so-called illogical impingement of the connotations of words" on the reader's consciousness, as he wrote to Harriet Monroe in 1926. Allied with this is the problem that any individual short poem may not offer a large enough context to establish the connotations of its key words. For a reader new to Crane's work, the most accessible entry way is through *The Bridge,* with its larger integrated network of images, structures, and motifs. As any reader who admires Crane's poetry knows, one often feels the emotional power but only the approximate sense of many of his lines, feels the impossibility of making an exact paraphrase of a well-loved passage. This effect is something Crane clearly understood: he wrote in his essay "General Aims and Theories" that it was "as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new *word* . . . impossible to actually enunciate" (163). Often this impossibility of enunciation is that readers differ not simply about what a line means but about what it says—for example, the famously problematic lines from "Lachrymae Christi": "Let sphinxes from the ripe / Borage of death have cleared my tongue / Once and again; vermin and rod / No longer bind." Some interpreters read the initial *let* as a verb and others as a noun (meaning "a hindrance or obstruction") used as an adjective, by analogy with the phrase a "let serve" in tennis. Frequently, the most effective approach to understanding a difficult passage is to recognize the type of structural gesture, the poetic "move" being made there, and then, in comparison to similar structures in other Crane poems, to construct an ap-

propriately enlarged context with enough additional information to begin explication, a process not unlike solving a simultaneous equation.

Take, for example, "Legend," the first poem in the 1926 collection *White Buildings.* Although placed at the start of the volume, "Legend," composed in 1924 and first published in September 1925, was written later than several poems that immediately follow it, its placement suggesting that Crane meant it to tell readers something crucial about the poet and the collection it introduced. In creating an image of mirroring and reflected images, "Legend"'s opening lines ("As silent as a mirror is believed / Realities plunge in silence by . . . ") prepare us for the various structures associated with narcissism that follow—structures of splitting and doubling, of the mutually constitutive opposition of self and projected reflection. This sense of a mutually constitutive opposition lies behind the second stanza's use of a moth-and-flame image for the dangerous attraction between self and other, or, perhaps more accurately, given the narcissistic component in Crane's sexuality, the fatal attraction between self and self-as-other, a love-death relationship in which the moth is attracted by the light and incinerated in the flame, the "white falling flakes" of its burned wings evoking the lover's "kisses . . . / The only worth all granting" (3). This imagery of a fiery love-death, of love as self-consuming (in a dual sense), will recur in Crane's poetry, most notably in the *heiros gamos* of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas and the chieftain's subsequent immolation. But in "Legend," love, considered as "This cleaving and this burning," can only be learned by one willing to spend "out himself again" and again, willing to expend the self repeatedly in this love-death (comprehending the "little death" of orgasm, the loss of the self's isolated individuality through the sense of union with the other, and the loss of love itself through the other's betrayal or parting).

When the third stanza begins "Twice and twice / (Again the smoking souvenir, / Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again" (3), one is tempted to read "twice and twice" as simply an enumeration meant to convey "repeatedly." However, since two is the only positive integer that produces the same number whether added or squared and since that resulting number (four) is the one most often connected with doubling, one again has the sense that "the smoking souvenir" and the "Bleeding eidolon" refer to images of the self, whether mirrored or shadowed. Four is the number usually associated with doubling because double stories (and particularly those Crane was familiar with like Poe's "William Wilson") characteristically involve both splitting and doubling. In such stories a division occurs in the protagonist's self, with one part of the self repressing another part in a master/slave relationship. This action endows the repressed part with a psychic energy that fuels its need to return and do battle with the master half for dominance, a return that usually occurs in such stories when the protagonist either endows a fantasized person with, or projects onto a real person, his sense that this other is the protagonist's antithetical double, in whom the master and slave halves of the protagonist's self have been reversed in terms of dominance and subservience. The protagonist and his double then engage in a duel to the death that in effect is an outward projection of the interior

conflict between the repressing and repressed halves of the protagonist's self, with predictably self-destructive results, as in "William Wilson."

"Smoking souvenir" and "Bleeding eidolon" evoke the smoke-like, insubstantial memories left from passion's incineration of the self and the wounds caused by the beloved's, or love's, betrayal. *Eidolon,* meaning "an image, phantom, or apparition" from the Greek root *eidolon* is, of course, a word closely associated with Whitman's poetry (as in the poem "Eidólons" from *Song of Myself*), and the word's Whitmanian aura (as well as the masochistic element implied by the adjective *bleeding*) suggests the narcissistic character of the love evoked in "Legend." The last three and a half lines of stanza 4, lines apparently meant to explain the significance of a repetition-compulsion that drives the speaker to the constant choice of love objects that incinerate or wound, conclude "and yet again / Until the bright logic is won / Unwhispering as a mirror / Is believed" (3). The logic of this repeated choice of the same type of lover, wounding though this choice may be, is that these love objects resemble the speaker—are, in effect, images of himself. As we noted earlier, Freud, in theorizing one possible origin of male homosexuality, contended that the son, too closely attached erotically to the unsatisfied mother, "finds the objects of his love along the path of *narcissism* . . . ; for Narcissus, according to Greek *legend* (italics mine), was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else" (Freud 11:100). The son, in effect, puts himself in the mother's place, "identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love" (Freud 11:99–100). And if in "Legend" the logic of the speaker's repeated attraction to the same type of lover is described by Crane as "bright," it is precisely because the root of this attraction lies in a mirror image, something created by reflected light rays.

What characterizes the imagery associated with mirroring in both the poem's opening line ("As silent as a mirror is believed") and in the last two lines of stanza 4 ("Unwhispering as a mirror / Is believed") is silence, but with "Legend"'s fifth stanza the imagery suddenly becomes one of sound, and more particularly of song and dance: "Then, drop by caustic drop, a perfect cry / Shall string some constant harmony— / Relentless caper for all those who step / The legend of their youth into the noon" (3). The phrase "drop by caustic drop" fuses the burning implicit in the previous stanza's "smoking souvenir" with the bloodletting of its "Bleeding eidolon" to create the image of a burning liquid, corrosive of the speaker's living flesh, that wrings from him "a perfect cry" of pain or longing, the cry transformed into song as the burning drops are strung like beads on a rosary (a recurring image in *The Bridge*) or strung word by word on the stringed instrument of a verse line in the poem's "constant harmony." Consider again for a moment the Whitmanian resonance of the word *eidólon,* a term that seemed to signify for Whitman the spiritual form or archetype of any person, object, or event—in effect, the essential mental image of any of these. In Whitman's poem "Eidólons," each of whose twenty-one stanzas ends with this word, the last two stanzas seem to have special relevance for "Legend":

Thy body permanent,
The body lurking there within thy body,
The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,
An image, an eidólon.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,
No special strains to sing, none for itself,
But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,
A round full-orb'd eidólon. (Whitman 9–10)

The penultimate stanza's sense of the ideal image or spiritual form of the poet's body, the "body permanent, . . . the real I," as being an eidólon is in effect completed by the last stanza's merging or identification of this eidólon with that of poetic song itself. Which is to say that in writing his poems the poet creates an alternate body for himself out of song, his poetic *corpus,* and he aims for this body to be permanent, to survive the physical body's death. But this permanent body of work is related to the poet's physical body as a silent visual image is to the sound of a living voice, as music printed is to music sung, as the visual image of the "real I" (the image cast by the poem's black print on the white page) is to the poet's voice in sounding out those words in the act of composition. This sense of the poem (and, by implication, the poetic *corpus*) as a mirror image of the poet's real self is what Crane means to associate himself with in "Legend" when he uses the Whitmanian word *eidólon,* an association that also accounts for Crane's characterizing the mirror and its images as "silent" and "unwhispering" in stanzas 1 and 4 as opposed to the sound of the "perfect cry" in stanza 5.

But Crane has even more to do here. If, by the age of twenty-four when he wrote "Legend," Crane had the sense that his extravagant conduct and his talent were becoming legendary within the contemporary poetry world, that he was being pursued by "a too well known biography," then "Legend" projects at the start of his first book an introductory image of himself that characterizes his sexual excesses and his exuberant poetic flights as two sides of the same coin, fueled by the same libido. In effect, he claims that the narcissism that drives his obsessively repetitive object-choice of young men also drives his need to create a poetic mirror image of himself on the page. And he doesn't intend to apologize for this state of affairs: he announces at the start of stanza 2, "I am not ready for repentance / Nor to match regrets," a line that anticipates his claim in "Lachrymae Christi" (a poem in which he deals with another form of excessive behavior, his frequent drunkenness, by evoking it as a Dionysian intoxication fueling the visionary sense of universal sympathy) that the process described in the poem creates "Not penitence / But song" (14). Though the pain of these loves is real and recurrent, yet the art that transforms the "perfect cry" born of that pain into a "constant harmony" is certainly joyous; in the final lines of "Legend," Crane characterizes the harmony created by poetic song as this "Relentless caper for all those who step / The legend of their youth into the noon" (3).

Always attentive in good Emersonian fashion to etymology, Crane would have known that *caper* (meaning "a playful leap or skip, a prance" as in a dance) came from the Latin root *caper,* a goat. As a reader of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy,* he would also have known that *tragedy* came from the Greek root *tragoidia,* meaning "goat song" (perhaps because the Dionysian choral celebrations from which Greek tragedy grew often involved the sacrifice of a goat to the god). He would have known as well that Nietzsche considered the ultimate aesthetic effect produced by Greek tragedy as being the sense of tragic joy, the joy that comes from seeing (and concurring in the fact) that suffering and death are part of the inexhaustible fecundity of nature. The movement that ends the poem, then, is clear: from the cry of pain at the death of a love affair, through the transformation of that cry into harmonious poetic song, which accompanies the joyous, goat-like capering step of the speaker, ready to spend out himself again. And, of course, the goat is a traditional image of lust, as in the ancient figure of the goat-footed satyr or the ancient representation of the god Pan "with a goat's horns, and with goat's hoofs" (Hamilton 40)—Pan, the inventor of the syrinx or reed-pipe, who led the woodland nymphs as they danced and who once challenged Apollo to a musical contest. Thus capering is an image of that sexual excess Crane claims in "Legend" is the inevitable accompaniment of his tragically joyful poetic song.

But there is one additional element in the poem's last line. Just as Whitman was the most powerful nineteenth-century American poetic influence on Crane's work, so Eliot was the most important twentieth-century influence, and there are echoes of, or counterstatements to, Eliot throughout Crane's poetry, particularly in the shorter poems. By 1924 Crane had read *The Waste Land* numerous times, as he said in one of his letters, to assure himself of its essential unity, and the last line of "Legend" seems to have been influenced by the shadow imagery from these lines in Eliot's poem: "I will show you something different from either / Your shadow at morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; / I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (Eliot, *Complete* 38). If the "perfect cry" of pain has been transformed into the "constant harmony" of poetic song and this latter has become the implicit musical accompaniment to a joyful capering dance, it is a dance "for all those who step / The legend of their youth into the noon" (3). At noon with the sun directly overhead, there is neither a morning shadow "striding behind you" (the residual gossip concerning the sexual excesses of his youth and its misspent energies) nor yet an evening shadow (either in the sense of a compulsive temporal doubling, i.e., an endlessly repeated, narcissistic object-choice in lovers, looming in the future, or in the sense of the ultimate shadow of death). At noon (the metaphorical outset of his career) the image of the poet's best self, the "real I" presented by his poetry, is like a mirror image, a bright body outline ("Until the bright logic is won," as Crane says) rather than a dark outline like a shadow. As the poet steps "the legend of his youth into the noon," that momentary absence of the shadows of past or future transforms the meaning of the word *legend* itself from "a story coming down from the

past" into "an inscription or title on an object (as on a coin or a portrait)" or "an explanatory list of the symbols of a map or chart." Both of these latter senses seem particularly appropriate as titles for a poem that, as the opening to the author's first book, serves at once as a self-portrait of the poet's "real I" and a gathering of symbols the reader needs to be familiar with in order to chart his way through the volume that follows. And as the introductory piece to a gathering of poems focusing on imagery of the mental word or *logos,* "Legend" is an ideal title, for, as Crane would have known, the Greek root of that word is the verb *legein,* "to gather, say," from the noun *logos,* "speech, word, reason." One thinks immediately of the ending of "Voyages," where the lover, having reached Belle Isle, finds "The imaged Word . . . the unbetrayable reply / Whose accent no farewell can know" (29), or that key sentence in Crane's "General Aims and Theories" about a poem giving "the reader as he left it a single new *word*" (163).

We discussed "Black Tambourine," the second poem in *White Buildings,* earlier in relating the poem's composite figure of the son/poet/slave/black singer to the ending of "The River" and to "Atlantis"'s image of the "floating singer." The only further point to note is Crane's early use here (the poem was written in 1921) of the trope of natural redemption/resurrection, which he would use again later in "Lachrymae Christi" and "Cape Hatteras." The poem begins with the image of a black man underground "in a cellar" like that in Crane's father's Cleveland restaurant where the storeroom was located. It had been tended by a black employee whom C. A. Crane fired in order to give Hart a job. The basement was also where the cooks and servers worked who ultimately became Hart's friends, black men who would not have been permitted to dine in the restaurant overhead. The only companions of the "black man in a cellar" are the insects (gnats and a roach) that one would expect in such a place, and the imagery with which they are evoked implies confinement; the gnats "toss in the shadow of a bottle" as if trapped inside, while the roach is able to cross a divide (to span "a crevice in the floor"), evoking by contrast the opposite condition—that of the black man confined by "the world's closed door" (4). From stanza 1's imagery of the black man's socioeconomic confinement underground, Crane moves in stanza 2 to the image of another slave underground: the buried Aesop, the Greek slave who wrote animal fables. Where the black man has been linked to two insects found in cellars, Aesop is linked to two animals from one of his best-known tales: "Aesop, driven to pondering, found / Heaven with the tortoise and the hare"—lines followed immediately by figures of natural resurrection and redemption: "Fox brush and sow ear top his grave / And mingling incantations on the air" (4).

What rises up from underground are living plants, each bearing an animal name pointing back to the animals of line two and by implication to the immortality that Aesop's animal fables have conferred upon his name. Aesop has gained not just immortality but a kind of redemption of his condition of servitude (in which men are treated like animals) by his stories (in which animals behave like men). The "incantations" (Latin, *incantare,* to enchant, from *cantare,* to sing) mingling in the air above Aesop's grave

are the words of a dead man's tales brought back to life almost magically in the mouths of the living, and they are perhaps as well blessings on Aesop's head for his art. The final stanza combines images from the poem's first two, presenting the black man's situation as something yet to be decided: it imagines him as being lodged in an in-between condition, a dark mid-kingdom between the contemporary stereotype of the black man in America, as represented by the minstrel show (the "tambourine, stuck on the wall"), and his African past. But the images of the tambourine and the "carcass quick with flies," the former a figure of song and the latter of natural transformation, would both seem to point back to Aesop's ultimate triumph, holding out the prospect of a possible redemption for the black man from his socioeconomic servitude through the power of art and song and of a natural resurrection evoked by the image of an animal corpse "quick with flies" (Old English, *cwic,* living, alive), an image that, in combining the insect imagery from stanza 1 with the animal imagery from stanza 2, evokes a process by which dead flesh (animal carrion) is transformed back into living matter through the action of the scavenging flies—in effect, the same process that Crane celebrates in the action of the worms in stanza 4 of "Lachrymae Christi."

The third poem in *White Buildings,* "Emblems of Conduct," is one of the least interesting in the volume. By now the story of the poem is well known. Most of it had been assembled from material taken from the unpublished writings of Samuel Greenberg, a Viennese-born immigrant to the United States who died of tuberculosis at the age of seventeen in 1917. Crane was introduced to Greenberg's poetry by a friend of his friend Slater Brown, and Crane reacted strongly to the Emersonian, visionary character of Greenberg's work. As R. W. B. Lewis has pointed out, "Emblems of Conduct" draws lines and images from at least three Greenberg poems ("Conduct," "Immortality," and "Perusal"), and Crane had misgivings about including "Emblems of Conduct" in *White Buildings,* feeling that the poem wasn't wholly his (183–86).

The poem's three stanzas record the passing in stages from the world of a spiritual or visionary consciousness, each stanza ending with the image of "spiritual gates." The first stanza evokes a moment in the distant past when a religious access to some form of transcendence through a spiritual gate was still a living, joyous experience, while the second stanza depicts the modern world's archaeological excavations of the dead past's religious belief: "Bowls and cups fill historians with adorations,— / Dull lips commemorating spiritual gates" (4). The third stanza then entertains the notion that "spiritual gates" are either only a memory now or that the persistence of such a memory may eventually lead to a redefinition of the spiritual as some form of natural transcendence: "By that time summer and smoke were past. / Dolphins still played, arching the horizons, / But only to build memories of spiritual gates"—the spiritual gate to something beyond or above having become the arch formed by the leaping dolphin against the far horizon.

The image of a gateway that gives access from one stage of life to an-

other or from this life to the next was to become of increasing importance in Crane's subsequent poetry, recurring in stanza 4 of the 1926 "Repose of Rivers" as the phrase "gulf gates," used to describe the Mississippi delta where the river pours into the Gulf (a scene that Crane would return to for the conclusion of "The River") and in the "Quaker Hill" section of *The Bridge* with the lines: "So, must we from the hawk's far stemming view, / Must we descend as worm's eye to construe / Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate . . . ?" (65). Recall in this connection that the spot over which the Brooklyn Bridge arches and below which the subway tunnel descends is immediately adjacent to a part of the East River known as Hellgate (an Anglicization of the Dutch name *Helegat,* meaning "bright passage"), a part containing rocks and whirlpools where several ships foundered in earlier years. The East River's Hellgate is part of what Crane is alluding to in using the image "take it to the Gate" just before the quester begins his subway descent into the underworld. But the other part of that allusion is a foreshadowing of the Blakean epigraph to "The Tunnel": "To Find the Western path / Right thro' the Gates of Wrath."

Given the movement in "Emblems of Conduct"—from a past moment of spiritual consciousness in the world (stanza 1) through the loss of that consciousness in the modern era (stanza 2) to a memory of that original state which may serve as a vision of its possible return (stanza 3)—one can see that its trajectory anticipates that of *The Bridge,* where the quester imaginatively journeys back to a past time and place in which a native people were spiritually wed to the land and then, as the quester returns through moments in American history (in "Indiana," "Cutty Sark," "Three Songs" "Cape Hatteras," and "The Tunnel"), traces the historical loss, through materialism, of that spiritual bond with the land, until finally in the prophetic vision of "Atlantis" the quester holds out the promise of a possible future return of that original spirituality.

The fourth poem in *White Buildings,* "My Grandmother's Love Letters," written in 1919, is shaped by this same trajectory—an imaginative movement back into the past to view a scene of spiritual union (the love between Hart's maternal grandparents recorded in his grandmother's letters, a union that, in our earlier discussion of this poem, we treated in terms of the Freudian fantasy of the primal scene, the child's imagining of its own conception) and then the attempt to return to the present with that image of a happy union still intact, an image of a personal origin for the poet that is prior to, and more efficacious than, his own parents' unhappy marriage. Or perhaps a more accurate description of the poem's ending would be that while such an attempted return is wished for, the poem's speaker wonders whether it is within poetry's power to effect: Crane asks himself in the fifth stanza: "Are your fingers long enough to play / Old keys that are but echoes: / Is the silence strong enough / To carry back the music to its source / And back to you again / As though to her?" (5). Part of the poet's question is whether in reading these love letters he can so identify himself with his grandmother that, entering into her consciousness, he experiences that original love between his grandparents as if a participant in their union,

in much the same way, for example, that the poetic quester in *The Bridge* identifies himself with Maquokeeta and imaginatively participates in the Indian chief's union with Pocahontas or that the quester after his night of drinking with the old sailor in "Cutty Sark" so completely enters into the other's consciousness that he can have a vision of the clipper ships at the end of that poem as if through the sailor's eyes. And the difficulty faced by the speaker in this imaginative task forms the poem's ending: "Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand / Through much of what she would not understand; / And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof / With such a sound of gently pitying laughter" (5). The sound of rain that ends the poem takes us back to the rain at the poem's start and to the image of skies obscured enough by rain clouds that "There are no stars tonight / But those of memory." In his metaphoric voyage back to the past, the speaker cannot chart his course by the stars, by those constellations the quester invokes again and again in *The Bridge* as guideposts on his journey. He can only see the stars in memory, but that raises the question of whether, when he would lead his grandmother by the hand "Through much of what she would not understand," the reason for her not understanding is that she would no longer remember experiencing the emotions contained in those letters, given that the woman who wrote the letters or to whom they were written, that younger self with whom Crane attempts to identify imaginatively, no longer exists—not because his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Belden Hart, was dead but because with the passage of time she had become a different person, her past emotions but a faint echo.

In characterizing what he tries to bring back from the past as music, a temporal art of sound ("To carry back the music to its source / And back to you again / As though to her"), the speaker makes clear that what he means to recapture is motion/emotion, something "moving" on both the physical and psychological levels, and thus something doubly ephemeral. This is why he cautions himself to be careful with something so fragile, something as "liable to melt as snow," for, "Over the greatness of such space / Steps must be gentle" (5). Or is it perhaps that the speaker feels that his grandmother, who'd had a loving marriage herself, wouldn't understand what had happened to her daughter's marriage and the effects this unhappy union had had on her grandson? At any rate the speaker seems at the poem's close resigned to the rain's "gently pitying laughter," resigned to the fact that the poem embodies a childlike (not to say childish) wish (and thus something allied to the child's fantasy of a primal scene) rather than an actual possibility.

The fifth poem in *White Buildings,* "Sunday Morning Apples," written in 1922 and published in 1924, is dedicated to Crane's Cleveland friend, the artist William Sommer. In the words of Crane's biographer John Unterecker, "If Crane can be said to have had a 'teacher,' Sommer was that teacher" (203). Crane's senior by some thirty years, Sommer was a painter who supported himself during the years Crane knew him by working for the Otis Lithography Company. In Sommer's studio, "an abandoned one-room schoolhouse" next to his home "in the rolling farm country along

Brandywine Creek" (196), a set of Cleveland-area artists and writers often gathered on Sundays for fellowship and to discuss the latest trends in art, music, and literature, and in 1921 and 1922 Crane formed one of their number. Sommer was a major influence in shaping Crane's taste in modern art and in developing what Unterecker calls Crane's sense of the "tactile quality" of poetry, the sense that a poem presents its subject in much the same manner as a modern painting, with the poet employing images, sounds, and the connotation of words in a manner analogous to that of a painter's use of line, color, and volume. Indeed, Crane was so taken with Sommer's art that he tried almost single-handedly, but ultimately unsuccessfully, to bring his work to the attention of the New York City art world and to place his work with art dealers there. Sommer became for Crane one of the earliest representatives whom he actually knew of a type that would much occupy his imagination and whose most compelling depiction would be the figure of Poe that the quester meets in "The Tunnel"—the American artist confronted by indifference and neglect and forced to pursue beauty in a condition of economic servitude. Or as Crane phrased it in his own case in "Porphyro in Akron": "in this town, poetry's a / Bedroom occupation" (100).

In "Sunday Morning Apples" Crane adopts a method he will use again later in *The Bridge,* building the poem around a circuit—in this case, of the seasons; in the case of "To Brooklyn Bridge," of the hours of the day from dawn to midnight. But the circuit of the seasons in "Sunday Morning Apples" is handled as two paired oppositions: the opposition between fall (stanza 1: "The leaves will fall again sometime") and spring (stanza 2: "But now there are challenges to spring") and that between winter (stanza 2: "the winter of the world") and summer (stanza 4: "A boy runs with a dog before the sun"). This balancing of opposites is a key feature of the dynamism Crane praises in Sommer's work. In stanza 2, Crane evokes the dynamic quality of a nude, "her purple shadow / Bursting on the winter of the world" versus the movement of real life in stanza 4 evoked by the boy running with a dog before the sun, "straddling / Spontaneities that form their independent orbits, / Their own perennials of light" (6). (These "independent orbits," as static evocations of motion, recall a technique like that in Duchamps's "Nude Descending a Staircase.") And the accumulation of circular forms—from the sun behind the boy and his dog, to the "independent orbits" that are "their own perennials of light," to the apples in the still life in stanza four, apples that Crane exhorts Sommer to place "again beside a pitcher with a knife, / And poise them full and ready for explosion"—recalls the opening of Emerson's essay "Circles": "The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world" (Emerson 2:301).

Though "Sunday Morning Apples" is not a great poem, it is significant for our purposes as an early example of Crane's interest in the relation between painting and poetry, an interest that would ultimately result in his comparing the arrangement of *The Bridge*'s sections to that of the Sistine

paintings. And perhaps significant also for the way his description of "that ripe nude with head / reared / Into a realm of swords, her purple shadow / Bursting on the winter of the world / From whiteness that cries defiance to the snow" (6) anticipates the feeling conveyed by his description of Helen in the first part of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." The other interesting detail in the poem occurs in the lines that locate its setting in Sommer's studio: "In the valley where you live / (called Brandywine) / I have seen the apples there that toss you secrets,— / Beloved apples of seasonal madness / That feed your inquiries with aerial wine" (6). According to Unterecker, "Jugs of cider" and "apples from the orchards that came right up to" Sommer's schoolhouse studio were among the frequent subjects of "Sommer's Sunday morning paintings" (Unterecker 196), and at his Sunday gatherings of artists and writers, there was always a jug of apple cider next to Sommer's chair. Beyond the turn on Brandywine and the "aerial wine" of apple cider, the detail of the apples' "seasonal madness" suggests that this aerial wine that fuels Sommer's artistic "inquiries" was an early version of that image of Dionysian intoxication that was to become so important to Crane's later poems and that represented an actual component of Crane's method of composition.

§ 2
"Praise for an Urn," "Garden Abstract," "Stark Major," "Chaplinesque"

"Praise for an Urn," the sixth poem in *White Buildings,* is also linked to William Sommer, its epigraph ("In Memoriam: Ernest Nelson") naming "one of Sommer's co-workers at Otis Lithography" (Unterecker 229). Nelson, in his fifties when Sommer introduced Crane to him, had been both a poet and painter in his earlier years. Though he knew Nelson for only a short period, Crane acknowledged the older man's "lasting influence." Unterecker notes that Crane thought Nelson "one of the best-read people" he had ever met and a person of "wonderful kindliness and tolerance and a true Nietzschean" (229)—this last being the highest term of praise in Crane's vocabulary. Nelson died in December 1921, struck by an auto as he crossed a Cleveland street, and Crane and Sommer were both pallbearers at his funeral. So moved was Crane by the ceremony, an occasion of "rare dignity" (230) as Unterecker describes it, that Crane immediately sought to memorialize his passing. Clearly, Nelson represented for Crane a figure much like their mutual friend Sommer—the neglected artist in twentieth-century America, forced to earn his living by practicing a craft related to but not coextensive with his art, a craft that denied him the freedom of choice in subject matter and execution that Crane thought indispensable to a true artist.

Crane begins the poem with an evocation of Nelson's Norwegian origin, referring to his "kind and northern face" but then adding immediately that it "mingled in such exile guise / The everlasting eyes of Pierrot / And,

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Crane begins the poem with an evocation of Nelson's Norwegian origin, referring to his "kind and northern face" but then adding immediately that it "mingled in such exile guise / The everlasting eyes of Pierrot / And,

of Gargantua, the laughter" (6). One senses that the word *exile* refers less to Nelson's absence from the land of his birth than to the fact that anyone mingling in his person the characteristics of Pierrot (the sad clown of the Commedia dell'Arte, moonstruck and out of touch with reality, naive and endlessly trusting) and Gargantua (the giant who is Pantagruel's father in Rabelais's multivolume sixteenth-century satire, a figure who evokes the author's humorous and sympathetic view of all human affairs along with a sense of their ultimate vanity) would inevitably feel himself an exile in Cleveland. As a reader of T. S. Eliot and of Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), Crane was already familiar with the poetry of Jules Laforgue and thus with the image of the poet as the hapless, moonstruck Pierrot Lunaire, the ironically modest, self-mocking figure of the artist in the modern world—the faintness of moonlight evoking the emotional attenuation and social marginalization of the typical Laforguian protagonist as interpreted by Eliot. (Pierrot is, of course, associated with the moon because he is the main character in the French folk song "Au Clair de la Lune.") Crane had published "Three Locutions des Pierrots" with the subtitle "from the French of Jules Laforgue" in May 1922, a month before he published "Praise for an Urn." (Contained in his volume *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune selon Jules Laforgue* [1886], Laforgue's "Locutions des Pierrots" is a suite of sixteen numbered poems that, in characteristically slangy yet elegant badinage, mock love and the beloved, woman's wiles and hopes, and Pierrot's "lunar dandyism." Crane translated only the first three poems in the suite, noting in a May 1922 letter to Charmion von Wiegand that though he was "mad about Laforgue," the French poet was "hard to translate and very acid" [Weber, *Letters* 86].) Crane in effect elaborates Nelson's character as an artist devoted to the pursuit of beauty, with his ultimate form of resistance being a humorous or ironic stance before the constraining forces of the great world, which is to say, the same combination of characteristics that Crane attributes to Chaplin's "little tramp" in "Chaplinesque."

In the second stanza of "Praise for an Urn," Crane, recalling his conversations with Nelson, imagines Nelson's thoughts now being "delivered to me / From the white coverlet and pillow" (7), these last evoking the paraphernalia associated with a corpse in a coffin but also probably alluding to the traditional costume of Pierrot, who is always depicted wearing a loose, white tunic and a pillow-like ruff at his neck. And it is the lunar associations of Pierrot that would seem to govern the opening image of stanza 3 when, after having described Nelson's thoughts as "inheritances— / Delicate riders of the storm" at the end of stanza 2, he says, "The slant moon on the slanting hill / Once moved us toward presentiments / Of what the dead keep, living still" (7). If moonlight evokes a kind of faintness or ghostliness, on the one hand, and the detached or transfiguring power of the imagination, on the other, then the image of the moon slanting downward toward the hill that in turn slants upward toward the moon suggests (in a manner reminiscent of Keats's tale of the moon goddess Cynthia's love for Endymion) the way in which the dead Nelson's thoughts, now that

he is lodged in the ghostly lunar sphere, persist in Crane as an inheritance toward which he turns lovingly.

However, this image of "the slant moon on the slanting hill," as well as the final two lines of the first stanza of "Praise for an Urn," are modifications of images originally used by Crane in another poem, the unpublished "The Bridge of Estador," written sometime between November 1920 and April 1921, a year before he published the elegy for Nelson. The context of the lines in "The Bridge of Estador" is instructive for the Nelson poem:

> High on the bridge of Estador
> Where no one has ever been before,—
> I do not know what you'll see,—your vision
> May slumber yet in the moon, awaiting
> Far consummations of the tides to throw
> Clean on the shore some wreck of dreams . . .
>
> But some are twisted with the love
> Of things irreconcilable,—
> The slant moon with the slanting hill:
> O Beauty's fool, though you have never
> Seen them again, you won't forget.
> Nor the Gods that danced before you
> When your fingers spread among stars.
>
> And you others,—follow your arches
> To what corners of the sky they pull you to,—
> The everlasting eyes of Pierrot,
> Or, of Gargantua, the laughter. (116–17)

One finds in these lines anticipations of phrases and images Crane was to use in later poems, the first and most obvious being the image of a bridge as a visionary place raised above the surrounding countryside, with its greater field of physical vision and, by implication, spiritual insight, but a visionary place also in the sense that the concept of bridging symbolizes the linking of opposing realms, such as the real and the ideal. And, second, mounted high on this bridge between reality and the imagination, one finds, not surprisingly, that one's vision is associated with the moon and the quest for beauty. From the moon image Crane moves to that of water and the tidal influence the moon exercises on the physical world: the person on the bridge awaits "Far consummations of the tides to throw / Clean on the shore some wreck of dreams." These lines foreshadow the image complex that begins "At Melville's Tomb": "Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge / The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath / An embassy. Their numbers as he watched, / Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured. // And wrecks passed without sound of bells" (24). At this point in "The Bridge of Estador," the image of "The slant moon with the slanting hill" comes as an illustration of what it means to be "twisted with the love / Of things irreconcilable"—the love of the imaginative (lunar) realm of ideal beauty, on the one hand, and of the earthly realm of real objects (the hill),

on the other. And since the moon and the hill are described as "slant" and "slanting," respectively, the love of these irreconcilables imparts a similar slant to the love, skewing the self caught between—and attracted (like the sea by the moon) to—these opposites so as to leave it "twisted." Clearly, the lover of the imaginative (lunar) realm of ideal beauty is Pierrot Lunaire, the figure addressed as "O Beauty's fool." The last eight lines of the poem in effect present two alternatives to its readers (those invoked as "you others" in the first line of the final quatrain and told to "follow your arches / To what corners of the sky they pull you to"); the alternatives are represented by "The everlasting eyes of Pierrot / Or, of Gargantua, the laughter." Pierrot, the artist, his eyes forever fixed on the plane of ideal beauty but forever saddened by the world's indifference to the realm of spirit, must accept that his pursuit of the ideal will make him appear a fool to the world. The alternative, evoked by the image of Gargantua, is to adopt a self-defensive, satiric (and perhaps even deadeningly cynical) stance toward that world of material success and the ultimate vanity of its objects.

Significantly, what Crane presented as alternatives (Pierrot, Gargantua) in "The Bridge of Estador" through the "Or" beginning its last line had become by the time of "Praise for an Urn" a conjunction of opposites in the figure of Nelson, whose face "mingled" the "everlasting eyes of Pierrot / And, of Gargantua, the laughter." This conjunction in Nelson's case may reflect the fact that though Nelson had in his younger years been both painter and poet, he had had to compromise with economic reality in his later years but had apparently done so without ever giving up his love of art while remaining humorously skeptical of material valuations of success. The alternatives that Nelson and Sommer had faced as twentieth-century American artists were the same ones Crane knew he would face, and if "Praise for an Urn" was an elegy for Nelson, it is also in some sense a prospective elegy for Crane. Before leaving "The Bridge of Estador," we should also point out that the image of following "your arches / To whatever corners of the sky they pull you to" anticipates the end of "Emblems of Conduct," when the dolphins "arching the horizons" evoke "memories of spiritual gates" (4).

The third stanza of "Praise for an Urn" suggests how pervasive a presence Eliot was for Crane during these years. Invoking "such assessments of the soul // As, perched in the crematory lobby, / The insistent clock commented on, / Touching as well upon our praise / Of glories proper to the time" (7), Crane not only recalls the clock image in Eliot's "Aunt Helen," a satiric elegy for a highly proper "maiden aunt" ("The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece / And the footman sat upon the dining table / Holding the second housemaid on his knees— / Who had always been so careful while her mistress lived") (Eliot 17), he also echoes Eliot's dry tone in phrases such as "assessments of the soul" and "our praise / Of glories proper to the time." But the Eliotic resonance should come as no surprise, given that the Pierrot image of stanza 1 had indicated Crane's acquaintance with the work of the French poet from whom Eliot had learned that tone.

Though Crane employs in stanza 4 this self-ironizing voice, one meant to undercut the sort of "glories proper to" a degraded time, he does so precisely to push off from it in the next stanza in a different direction—a more modest, heartfelt one: "Still, having in mind gold hair / I cannot see that broken brow / And miss the dry sound of bees / Stretching across a lucid space" (7). Though the Norwegian-born Nelson may in fact have had blond hair, "gold hair" is, nevertheless, Crane's characteristic metonym for Helen of Troy, the personification of ideal beauty, as in those lines from the third section of "The Marriage of Faustus and Helen" about lovers of beauty whose "substance" is "drilled and spent beyond repair / For golden, or the shadow of gold hair" (23). The physical contiguity of hair and brow moves the imagery from the first to the second line, from an image of ideal beauty to that of a lover of such beauty whose brow has been broken, "spent beyond repair." The significance of the third line's "dry sound of bees" depends on how one interprets the verb *miss* and what one judges has been elided in the syntax. I have always read it as saying, "I cannot see that broken brow and not miss the way it recalls the dry sound of bees stretching across a lucid space"—referring perhaps, as some critics have thought, to the fact that Nelson may have kept bees, but more likely, to my way of thinking, evoking the sweetness of Nelson's thoughts, as if his mind were a bee hive or honeycomb that had been broken open. In which case the humble, ceaselessly working honeybees would be a figure of Nelson as worker and artist, and if the sweetness of Nelson's *thought* is what's being evoked here, then the next line's *lucid* reinforces this figure. One inevitably recalls in this regard Yeats's image in "Blood and the Moon" of "Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the honey-pot of his mind" (*Poems* 237).

In the final stanza the poem becomes self-reflexive, commanding the reader to "Scatter these well-meant idioms / Into the smoky spring . . . / where they will be lost." Just as at the ending of "My Grandmother's Love Letters" Crane steps back from the poem's imaginative fantasy into the real world to hear the rain's "gently pitying laughter," so at the end of Nelson's elegy he steps back from the poem's imaginative intentions, the "well-meant" praise of his dead friend, to view it as simply a matter of words whose ultimate dispersal is as inevitable as that of his friend's substance, the injunction "Scatter . . . into the smoky spring" evoking Nelson's cremation and the disposal of his ashes. The poem's concluding line, "There are no trophies of the sun," in effect qualifies or explains the poem's inadequacy to fix and hold something lasting of Nelson's self against the relentless erosion of time, the inadequacy asserted in the last stanza's first three lines. Crane undoubtedly intended the image of the sun in the last line to be read against the moon imagery of Pierrot Lunaire and "the slant moon on the slanting hill" earlier in the poem, with the poem's trajectory running from the moon, whose light evokes the nighttime world of dreams and the transfiguring power of the imagination, to the sun, whose light stands for the daytime world of reality and the enlightening power of reason. But this trajectory from imagination to reality is also a movement from a faint, secondary light (the moon as reflector) to a strong, primary

one, and since the strength of the sun's light is a function of the continual incineration of its substance, Crane thus implies an analogy between Nelson's cremation and the sun's self-consuming incandescence. With that analogy in mind we can begin to grasp the full force of the poem's last line. The poem's governing image, as established by its title, is that of a cinerary urn containing the ashes of Crane's friend Nelson, but, of course, such an urn, whose shape is characteristically that of a vase with a lid, bears a general resemblance to the kind of loving cup often given as a trophy for a victory. The word *trophy,* from the Greek *trópaion,* ultimately derives from the Greek *tropé* meaning "turning, flight, defeat," and its original meaning was "anything taken in war, . . . especially when preserved as a memento; a spoil or prize," the notion being that when the enemy turned and fled in battle, whatever they left behind became a trophy of victory. In calling Nelson's elegy, "Praise for an Urn," Crane meant to recall a tradition of famous urns in poetry: from Donne's lines in "The Canonization" that if the lovers' legend prove "unfit for tombs or hearse," it "will be fit for verse" to "build in sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well wrought urn becomes / The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs"; to Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," a memorial to the common folk buried there who, "If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise . . . / Can storied urn or animated bust / Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"; and on to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where the urn is not a cinerary vessel but a painted Greek *krater,* yet no less a memorial to a dead time and people.

In placing his poem within this tradition, Crane in effect presents his elegy for Nelson as a sort of verbal urn, an imaginative container for that portion of his dead friend's self that can be captured and retained in language. (Indeed, it seems clear that Crane intended his readers to understand the poem's title as meaning not "praise of an urn" but rather "praise as an urn" or "praise in place of an urn.") But in invoking this tradition Crane also takes on part of its rhetorical stance: that the verbal urn of the elegy will ultimately be as ineffective as any funeral monument in preserving the deceased's vital essence, since time not only erodes shapes and inscriptions in stone and metal but language and memory as well. In echoing the line from Gray's "Elegy" ("If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise") with his own "no trophies" image, Crane meant to link his elegy specifically to the subject matter of that earlier poem, an elegy not for someone famous whose memory would go down to the ages but rather for the type of anonymous, humble person buried in a country churchyard or, as Gray says in the concluding epitaph in his poem, "*A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.*" And since Crane felt that Nelson, the former painter and poet forced to work as a lithographer, was just such a person ("some mute inglorious Milton" perhaps, as Gray mused about one inhabitant of the graveyard), the appropriateness of the allusion to Gray's "Elegy" becomes obvious.

In the last line of Nelson's elegy, Crane implicitly associates the fire of the sun with the crematory fire that consumed his friend's corpse. He does so precisely to undercut any sense of a further analogy between the remains of the two fires—Nelson's ashes, on the one hand, and, on the other,

whatever might remain after the sun had exhausted all its material and burned itself out, removing light, warmth, and life from this world. For if the trophy-like urn containing Nelson's ashes could be seen as a memento simultaneously of an individual life's defeat in death and of the victory, the persistence, of Life itself, what trophy, what victory, could there be in the sun's burning itself out, when Life itself would cease? Such an event would incinerate the mutually constitutive, differential opposition between (and thus the very meaning of) victory and defeat. Earlier, we located the root of the word *trophy* in the Greek *tropé,* meaning "turning, defeat, flight," and Crane certainly knew that that Greek word was also the root of the English word *trope* (a poetic figure of speech), a "turn" of phrase. Thus, when he says at the end of the poem, "There are no trophies of the sun," he is referring both to the cinerary urn with Nelson's ashes and to his own elegy for Nelson; for if the sun is what it is only through time, motion, and change (through constant burning), then no product of that temporal process can be a faithful evocation of it once the process has ceased, any more than the ashes of Nelson's body could be an evocation of his vital essence. Yet the silent words of a poem printed on a page, which can be brought to life again in the voices of the living, come closer to evoking a temporal process than do "urn and animated bust." Thus, though the last line of Crane's poem convicts both cinerary urn and elegy alike of inadequacy in preserving his dead friend, still the name of Ernest Nelson is only known today because of Crane's dedication.

Written in 1920, "Garden Abstract," the seventh poem in *White Buildings,* might seem at first, because of the use of the word *abstract* and a certain amount of visual imagery in the piece, to be yet another instance of the influence of modernist painting on Crane's work. While that may be part of the explanation for Crane's choice of the word, it is much more likely that he found in the etymology of the word *abstract* a depiction of the poem's subject matter. As a reader of Emerson, Crane would have been familiar with his statement in the "Language" section of *Nature* that every word "if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance" (Emerson 25) and that "As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry" (Emerson 29). In *American Hieroglyphics,* I dealt with Emerson's and his contemporaries' notion that, by using words in light of their etymological origins, modern writers, even though they wrote a phonetic language in a phonetic script, could gain access to something like an older, more pictographic, and thus more poetic language in which words were direct copies of the "material appearance" of the objects or actions they signified. This was a notion with which Crane, as an avid reader of the writers of the American Renaissance, was familiar and to which he seems to have subscribed. What, then, is the etymology of "abstract" and what picture does it give us of the action of Crane's poem? The word derives from the Latin *abstractus,* past participle of the verb *abstrahere,* meaning "to draw away from" a place or person, or "to drag away." In "Garden Abstract" Crane presents us with a sort of Ovidian metamorphosis in which a young woman in a garden

becomes so enraptured by nature that she feels herself transformed into a tree. One immediately thinks of the episode of Apollo and Daphne in Book I of the *Metamorphoses* where the sun god Apollo falls in love with the nymph Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus, and pursues her. She flees, and just as Apollo is about to capture her, she cries out to her father, asking that he change her, destroying the beauty by which she evoked this unwanted passion: "Scarce had she thus prayed when a down-dragging numbness seized her limbs, and her soft sides were begirt with thin bark. Her hair was changed to leaves, her arms to branches. Her feet, but now so swift, grew fast in sluggish roots, and her head was now but a tree's top" (*Ovid* 3:41). Yet even in this new form Apollo still loved her: "He embraced the branches as if human limbs, and pressed his lips upon the wood. But even the wood shrank from his kisses. And the god cried out to this: 'Since thou canst not be my bride, thou shalt at least be my tree. My hair, my lyre, my bow shall always be entwined with thee, O laurel'" (3:41).

In Crane's poem, however, the tree in the garden is not a laurel but an apple ("The apple on its bough is her desire— / Shining suspension, mimic of the sun"). With the imaginative metamorphosis of the red globe of the apple into that of the sun, we suddenly find that Phoebus Apollo, the sun god, has entered the poem and that what we had thought was an evocation of Eve and the apple tree turns quickly to a Daphne-like metamorphosis of the young woman: "The bough has caught her breath up, and her voice, / . . . She is prisoner of the tree and its green fingers. // And so she comes to dream herself the tree" (Crane 7–8). And just as Apollo still loved Daphne even after her transformation, so in Crane's poem the young woman, dreaming "herself the tree," finds "The wind possessing her, weaving her young veins, / Holding her to the sky and its quick blue. / Drowning the fever of her hands in sunlight" (8). Where Daphne had fled the sun god who wished to seize and forcibly carry her off, in effect to rape her, the woman in Crane's poem desires the apple that is an image of the sun. Her garden rapture (literally, her being "carried off to another sphere of existence" by strong emotion, from the Latin *raptus,* past participle of *rapere,* the root of the word *rape*) drags her away or abstracts her, carrying her off into an intense identification with the natural world. In effect, her capture by Nature fulfills her desire, as the sun, through its intermediary the wind, possesses her and responds to the warmth of her desire (expressed in the fever of her hands) with the warmth of sunlight. The poem ends with the woman's sense of her loss of self through this total absorption in nature: "She has no memory, nor fear, nor hope / Beyond the grass and shadows at her feet" (8), a line that may convey some sense of Crane's own ambivalence about memory, about his "too well-known biography," and the feeling of relief at memory's loss.

I have always heard in the poem's last line an echo of an image from the fifth stanza of Stevens's "Sunday Morning": "She makes the willow shiver in the sun / For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze / Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet," the "She" being "Death, the mother of beauty," from whom, we are told at the stanza's start, "Alone, shall come

fulfillment to our dreams / and our desires" (7). Since "Garden Abstract" begins with the image of a sun-like apple representing the woman's desire and ends with a loss of self in the Other, a figurative death of the individual consciousness through its absorption into nature, and since the image of the grass in each poem is meant to recall the biblical "All flesh is grass" as a reminder of our final end (underlined by the addition of the "shadows" image in the last line of "Garden Abstract"), one might almost read the echo in Crane's poem as a conscious allusion to the subject of Stevens's "Sunday Morning" and to its female protagonist, who prefers the desires and pleasures of the physical world to the promise of a metaphysical afterlife.

Though Eliot was the most powerful contemporary poetic influence on Crane's work, Stevens was also someone whose work Crane greatly admired. In a November 1919 letter to Gorham Munson, Crane directs Munson's attention to some Stevens poems in the October issue of *Poetry* and adds, "There is a man who makes most of the rest of us quail. His technical subtleties alone provide a great amount of interest" (217). And as late as July 1931, in a letter to Louis Untermeyer, the poetry anthologist, Crane writes, "Does anyone know what has happened particularly to Wallace Stevens of late? I miss fresh harmonies from him almost more than I can say. There never was anyone quite like him, nor will there be! I don't think any critic has ever done him full justice, either, and it's a temptation to attempt it sometime oneself" (687). If the last line of "Garden Abstract" doesn't represent an allusion to the Stevens poem, then at the very least the imagery from "Sunday Morning" probably represents a conscious or unconscious source for "the grass and shadows at her feet."

The eighth poem in *White Buildings,* "Stark Major," written and first published in 1923, is a bleakly modern aubade recording the parting of lovers at daybreak, a parting twice characterized in the poem as "the lover's death" (8). In our earlier discussion of "Legend," we noted the love-death conjunction as a recurring theme in Crane's poetry. Certainly, "the lover's death" in the first stanza of "Stark Major" (as an image of the man's rising at dawn from a postcoital slumber to leave his lover still in bed) is meant to imply the conjunction of, on the one hand, the "little death" of orgasm (with its ensuing death-like slumber) and, on the other, the death of lovemaking through the lover's parting (considered as a foreshadowing of death itself), a conjunction implicit in the etymology of the title's words. The ultimate root of *stark* is the Anglo-Saxon *stearc,* meaning "stiff," and the modern meanings of *stark* include "stiff or rigid in substance or muscle and, specifically, rigid in death" (as in the slang term for a corpse) and "absolutely naked." *Major* derives from the comparative form of the Latin adjective *magnus,* meaning "great or large." Consequently, one might read "stark major" as "the greater death" (that of separation or parting) as opposed to the lesser death of orgasm. But of course the Anglo-Saxon root *stearc* meaning "stiff" could have a sexual connotation as well, evoking the stiffness necessary to effect coitus. The man's departure from the bed of his lover is figured as the usual start of his day: "The lover's death how regular / With lifting spring and starker / Vestiges of the sun that somehow

/ Filter in to us before we waken." There is a moment perhaps when we hear the word *spring* in the second line as meaning the season of renewed life, before realizing it refers to the bedspring lifting as the man gets out of bed. But Crane intends for that momentary hearing of the word as the season (when seeds buried in the ground come back to life) to function as a counterpoint to the image of the lover's death, particularly since the woman whom he has made love to and who remains in bed is associated with life: "Beneath the green silk counterpane / Her mound of undelivered life / Lies cool upon her—not yet pain." The phrase "Her mound of undelivered life" suggests that either she is, or has that night become, pregnant by their lovemaking or that she represents the fecund female potential for new life—that, lying there beneath the *green* counterpane, she is, in keeping with the hint of spring and natural regeneration in the first stanza, the seedbed.

Whereas the first stanza describes the man's departure at dawn, the second looks forward to his imagined return at evening when "hands joined in the dark will answer," but that time is "not yet," for this is "the time of sundering." As the man walks quietly past her door, the woman will wake, "laugh and call your name; while you / Still answering her faint goodbyes / Will find the street, only to look / At doors and stone with broken eyes" (8). This last phrase, recalling the "broken brow" of Nelson's corpse in "Praise for an Urn," in effect makes the metaphoric "lover's death" of the man's departure at dawn a foreshadowing of physical death. And as the man walks away, the poem ends with the injunction: "note the lover's death. / Henceforth her memory is more / Than yours, in cries, in ecstasies / You cannot ever reach to share" (8). In contrast to the man's imagined return at close of day (as evoked in the second stanza), the last stanza's tone suggests that his departure at dawn may not be just a temporary leave-taking but a final parting, an abandonment of the woman who may or may not be pregnant. Or perhaps the sense of the last stanza is that just as the little death of orgasm foreshadows the greater death of the body (the engendering of any individual life necessarily entailing the ultimate loss of that life in death), so any temporary parting of lovers may foreshadow their final parting, an ultimate betrayal or abandonment.

But there is a further sense in the last stanza of the duality of loss on the man's part, a duality corresponding to the little death of sex and the greater death of parting: in orgasm the man loses his seed, which may become the source of new life, but if this is the lesser loss, then the greater is that of memory. Since the man leaves and the woman stays, he in effect initiates their parting. If, as the last lines suggest, it is a final parting, then this leave-taking seems to entail as well a sort of willed forgetfulness on his part that gives the phrase "the lover's death" a further resonance. If the woman has passed out of, been diminished, in his memory, she has, as it were, died in his consciousness. And if, as Crane says, henceforth her memory of the man is more than his memory of her, that also suggests that just as the woman has retained his seed after a night of lovemaking and the possible child that results, her memory of him will be greater and more retentive

because she will have a living memorial of the man in the child. The phrase "in cries, in ecstasies" seems to suggest memories of their lovemaking, but "cries" sends us back to the lines in stanza 3 describing the sleeping woman: "Her mound of undelivered life / Lies cool upon her—not yet pain." All of which suggests that Crane may be creating in this poem a turn on the notions of parting and parturition, of the man leaving the woman's body as a foreshadowing of (and because of) the child that will ultimately leave her.

Written and first published in 1921, "Chaplinesque," the ninth poem in *White Buildings,* is another elaboration of the theme of the artist or lover of beauty as a marginalized figure in the modern world, symbolized in this instance by Charlie Chaplin's trusting and endlessly resilient "little tramp." The poem begins with the image of the "meek adjustments" that such a figure must make in light of his relatively insignificant social status, his humbleness in the face of the great world and of his persistent ability to find contentment "in such random consolations / As the wind deposits / In slithered and too ample pockets" (9), an image recalling one ("J'ai des consolations plein les poches" [344]) in Jules Laforgue's poem "XXXVIII Dimanches" from the volume *Des Fleurs de bon volonté.* (In Laforgue's poem, the speaker, a neglected poet, says that his life has been full of misfortunes and that he wishes he could get far away from this knowing, pugnacious era ["ce savant siècle batailleur"] to a cozy room where a little woman ["Une maigre"] would talk to him and make him forget his art as she awakened at dawn in his bed. The resemblance between Laforgue's neglected poet who's had nothing but bad luck and Chaplin's "little tramp" figure would not have been lost on Crane.)

In stanza 2 the little tramp's tenacity in defending from indifference or cruelty any creature weaker than himself is presented as the capacity to "still love the world" exhibited by one who, despite his meekness, finds "a famished kitten on the step" and shelters it from "the fury of the street." The kind of fury—an encounter with a suspicious cop—that the little tramp characteristically faces on the street in so many of Chaplin's silent two-reelers is evoked in the third stanza: the cop points his "puckered index toward us," and the little tramp must "sidestep" and "Dally the doom of that inevitable thumb" as the cop with a "dull squint" gestures for him to be on his way and off the cop's beat. But, says Crane, these meek acquiescences in humiliating encounters, "these fine collapses," are not lies any "More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane" (a pliant, bamboo cane being one of the signature items associated with the little tramp, along with his derby hat, baggy pants, big shoes, and toothbrush moustache). That cane, which Chaplin wielded with such deftness and agility, serves as a physical embodiment of the little tramp's spiritual and psychological resilience, his ability to be knocked down and spring back up, in much the same way that his bamboo cane, which could be bent almost double, always sprang back into shape. It also symbolized, much like a king's scepter or a cop's baton, the absolute physical authority Chaplin's acrobatic agility gave "the little tramp" figure, an authority that took the form of an almost magical domination of physical objects.

Commenting on the assertion that "these fine collapses are not lies / More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane," Crane continues, "Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise" (9), a line whose dual point depends on the reader's understanding that the words *obsequies* (meaning "funeral or burial rites") and *obsequious* (meaning "a fawning attentiveness or subservience") derive from similar roots and thus, to use Emerson's phrase, from a similar "material appearance" (the action "to follow") contained in those roots. *Obsequies* is from the French *exsequi* (meaning "to follow out," as, presumably, in a cortege or funeral procession) from the medieval Italian *obsequiae* and the Latin *exsequiae* (regarding this form of the word one thinks of the title of Henry King's poem for his dead wife, "The Exequy"); *obsequious* is from the French *obsequi* (meaning "to comply," formed from *ob-* "toward" + *sequi* "to follow," as in following someone's wishes or orders). In using the word *obsequies* to characterize the little tramp's humble compliance with the cop's ordering him off his beat, Crane means to evoke this seemingly obsequious behavior, the tramp's acceptance of a public humiliation, as a little death of the self. This image of a little death is confirmed in the next two lines when Crane says, "We can evade you, and all else but the heart: / What blame to us if the heart live on" (9), for if, as he says, one part of the self lives on, that necessarily implies some other part of the self (pride, self-respect) has died. One wonders if the origin of *obsequious* in the French *obsequi,* "to com*ply,*" had by echoic suggestion given Crane the word *pliant* to describe the cane that symbolizes the little tramp's ability to bend but not break, to abase himself but still remain true to his best instincts. The turn on *obsequies* raises the further possibility that, in the line "Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise," Crane means for us to look at the origin of the word *enterprise* as well. It derives from the past participle of the old French verb *entreprendre*, "to undertake," and the noun (*undertaker*) that comes from that English verb would have resonated for Crane with the funereal meaning of *obsequies* (we are knee deep here in Crane's "dynamics of inferential mention"). The usual meanings of *enterprise* are "an undertaking that is especially difficult, complicated, or risky"; "initiative, the readiness to engage in daring action"; "a systematic purposeful activity." Thus one of the several possible meanings of the line "Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise" would be that the little tramp's sidestepping of a confrontation with authority by obsequious compliance, though it may look like a death of the self that evokes a funeral image ("obsequies"), is not a total death requiring an undertaking (a burial), since "the heart lives on." Of course, it can also mean that the little evasions the tramp must make in order to survive, the small humiliations he is forced to suffer, are his own systematic, purposeful alternative to engaging in a daring act of resistance that would ultimately be suicidal.

The poem's last stanza begins with Crane commenting on the type of behavior forced on Chaplin's little tramp figure (and by implication on any lover of beauty) in modern America: "The game enforces smirks," an unwilling compliance that must be masked by affected smiles. Yet Crane immediately adds, "but we have seen / The moon in lonely alleys make / A

grail of laughter of an empty ash can / And through all sound of gaiety and quest / Have heard a kitten in the wilderness" (9). In invoking moonlight as a figure of the imagination's power to transform an ash can into a grail, Crane may also be alluding to a group of visual artists, the so-called Ash-can School (Davies, Henri, Glackens, Sloan, Shinn, Bellows, etc.) whose often bleak New York cityscapes, painted during the early decades of the twentieth century, exhibited the visual transfiguration of an urban wilderness into a thing of beauty. The transformation from a container for human refuse (the ash can) to a container for divine blood (the grail) implicates that other transformation believed to have occurred *in* the grail from man-made wine to the blood of a god and evokes self-reflexively that further human/divine transformation that the little tramp undergoes within Crane's poem from a figure whom the great world considers to be human refuse (his proper dwelling place being in a lonely alley near an ash can) to a figure who, because of his humility and kindness, deserves the Christic aura bestowed on him by the grail image and by the last line's echo of the biblical "a voice crying in the wilderness."

Given the moon image in the poem's last stanza and the echo of the pocketful-of-consolations image from Laforgue's "XXXVIII Dimanches" in the first, consider again the relation between "Chaplinesque" and "Praise for an Urn," between Chaplin's little tramp and the lunar Pierrot imagery applied to Nelson, the neglected artist. "Praise for an Urn" was written in 1921–22 and published in June 1922, "Chaplinesque" written in October and November of 1921 and published in December 1921, and "Three Locutions des Pierrots (from the French of Jules Laforgue)" written and published in May 1922—which is to say that Crane had worked on these poems within the same period of ten or so months. One reason for our considering individual poems in the order in which Crane arranged them in *White Buildings* is to see the affinities of subject matter and imagery such proximity reveals, allowing us, for example, to notice the link between Nelson's actual death and the tramp's little death of the self and to see why Nelson's elegy is set "in the crematory lobby" and the little tramp's obsequious self-abasements are described as "obsequies" or funeral rites. Perhaps we can intuit as well, since Nelson's death had been the result of a random accident, why "Chaplinesque" opens with the image of "meek adjustments" that make us "contented with . . . *random* consolations" (italics mine). Further, we can see the connection between "Praise for an Urn" and "Chaplinesque," on the one hand, and the two poems that come between them in *White Buildings,* on the other; for as "Praise for an Urn" deals with the actual death of Nelson, so "Garden Abstract" deals with the young woman's metaphoric death of self-consciousness as she feels herself absorbed into nature. This leads into "Stark Major" and "the lover's death" that evokes the little deaths of orgasm and of parting, and this, in turn, into "Chaplinesque," with its little death of the self.

Given the links between the figures of Nelson and Chaplin's little tramp—that Nelson is said to have the "eyes of Pierrot" (the sad clown associated with the moon), that Chaplin's little tramp is a pathetic clown,

and that in both poems, influenced by Laforgue, the moon appears as a figure of transformative imagination—one is tempted to give oneself over again to the Cranian dynamic of inferential mention, to that suprarational dimension of language that is the poet's true domain. One might wonder if Crane's choice of the word *pirouettes* in the line "And yet these fine collapses are not lies / More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane" was meant to evoke the word *Pierrot,* wonder whether this aural resemblance between the two words should be considered an allusion, a source, or simply an example of what psychologists of language call "priming," the way that (because Crane had worked on the Nelson elegy, the Chaplin poem, and his "Three Locutions des Pierrots" all within a ten-month span) the presence of one word in the poet's consciousness could have drawn up out of his unconscious another word resembling it in sound. At any rate the pirouettes of the little tramp's pliant cane, which symbolize the pathetic clown's compliance with a harsh reality, certainly constitute a mental rhyme with the sad clown Pierrot.

As we said, in considering not only the individual poems in *White Buildings* but also the specific order in which Crane arranged them in the volume, we can see how Crane created, through the proximity of certain poems to each other, an enlarged context, an intertextual space of meaning. Standing back a step further, we can see that the arranging of the poems in his first volume as if they were components of a single larger work was a trial run for his ordering of the sections in *The Bridge,* an ordering in which an image or structure from one section casts its shadow, as it were, across a contiguous section, building up (in a process we described earlier as lateral foreshadowing) a composite figure such as that of the virgin-mother-lover. Finally, we can see that the quality that Crane claimed for the sections of *The Bridge* in analogizing their arrangement to that of the Sistine paintings (that each section "is a separate canvas . . . yet none yields its entire significance when seen apart from the others") applies as well to the poems in *White Buildings.*

§ 3
"Pastorale," "In Shadow," "The Fernery," "North Labrador"

Written around the middle of 1921 and first published in October of that year, "Pastorale," the tenth poem in *White Buildings,* is a rather slight, "mood" piece, the sort of work a young poet includes in his first volume so that he'll have enough poems to make up a first volume. (Crane's "The Fernery" and "North Labrador" are other, more extreme examples of this.) The poem begins: "No more violets, / And the year / Broken into smoky panels. / What woods remember now / Her calls, her enthusiasms" (9). That there are no more violets (which usually bloom in the spring) and that the year is broken into "smoky panels" (Crane tends to associate smoke with the passage from spring into summer as in the image of "the smoky spring that fills / The suburbs" from "Praise for an Urn" and in the line "By

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that time summer and smoke were past" from "Emblems of Conduct") suggest the season in which the poem is set. Further, the word *broken*—which Crane often associates with an individual's experience of painful reality (as when the departing lover in "Stark Major" looks at the street "with broken eyes") and with the heartbreak that leads to human insight and to the compensations of art (as when at the close of "Quaker Hill" he says, "pain . . . / Breaks us and saves, yes, breaks the heart, yet yields / That patience that is armour and that shields / Love from despair—when love foresees the end")—alerts us to the poem's implied situation: the break-up of the relationship of the poem's male speaker and the woman of whom he's speaking, a relationship present in the spring but gone by the summer. The detail of "no more violets" also contributes to this sense, for in the language of flowers, popular in the Victorian era, the blue violet signified "Faithfulness—I'll always be true." The fact that the woods no longer remember the woman's calls, her enthusiasms, would seem simply to be a displacement onto the natural world of her own forgetfulness of their affair.

In stanza 2 the man thinks back to the spring, "That ritual of sap and leaves / The sun drew out," a time that has now ended "in this latter muffled / Bronze and brass. The wind takes rein" (10). And the poem moves swiftly to its conclusion:

> If, dusty, I bear
> An image beyond this
> Already fallen harvest,
> I can only query, "Fool—
> Have you remembered too long;
>
> Or was there too little said
> For ease or resolution—
> Summer scarcely begun
> And violets
> A few picked, the rest dead?" (10)

Though the relationship has ended by early summer, the speaker is still remembering the woman at a point after "this / Already fallen harvest" in late summer or early autumn, a season of "Bronze and brass," of dry heat when the wind has risen and the air is filled with dust. The fact that the speaker describes himself as "dusty" also suggests that the love affair has come to nothing, like dust in the wind, or died, like the violets in the poem's last line, which had been picked perhaps as a bouquet by the young man as token of his faithfulness.

In this regard we can see links, in imagery, between "Pastorale" and some of the poems immediately preceding it in *White Buildings,* particularly those written in the period 1920 to 1921. For example, just as the wind-blown dust in "Pastorale" evokes the death of the love affair (in an ashes-to-ashes, dust-to-dust fashion) at a point when "the year" is "Broken into smoky panels," so in "Praise for an Urn" Crane's injunction to "scat-

ter" the words of his elegy "Into the smoky spring" is meant to evoke the scattering of the cremated Nelson's ashes. And since Crane describes the harvest as "fallen" in "Pastorale," one gets the sense of a fruit harvest and recalls the opening line of "Garden Abstract," where it is said of the young woman, "The apple on the bough is her desire," the suggestion of Eve and the apple as a figure for the sexual fall from innocence into experience resonating in "Pastorale"'s "fallen harvest" image and the situation of the man and woman. We should also note that while in "Stark Major" the woman's "memory" of her lover "is more" lasting than his of her, in "Pastorale" it is the man's memory of the woman, that "image" of her he "bears" beyond the fallen harvest, that remains.

Written in 1917 and first published in December of that year, "In Shadow," the eleventh poem in the volume, is one of the two earliest that Crane included in the book. It has always been a favorite of mine among his short poems: Elegant, with all the charm of a Caroline lyric, it demonstrates how sophisticated Crane's poetic technique was by the age of seventeen, able to match the rhythm and verbal texture of the lines so closely to the movement of the poem's thought in tailoring a close-fitting sleeve of sound on a syntactic armature. The poem begins with a woman walking in a garden at twilight: "Out in the late amber afternoon, / Confused among chrysanthemums, / Her parasol, a pale balloon, / Like a waiting moon, in shadow swims" (10). The image of "a pale balloon, / Like a waiting moon" echoes the opening language of Eliot's "Conversation Galante," written in 1909, published in *Poetry* magazine in 1916 and first collected in *Prufrock and Other Observations* in 1917, the poem's elegant badinage between a man and woman in the moonlight being the likely starting point for what Crane was aiming at with "In Shadow." "Conversation Galante" opens: "I observe: 'Our sentimental friend the moon! / Or possibly (fantastic, I confess) / It may be Prester John's balloon / Or an old battered lantern held aloft / To light poor travellers to their distress.' / She then: 'How you digress!'" The dialogue between the two makes up the poem's remaining stanzas, he making witty observations, exhibiting his intellect for the woman and assuming that his remarks will sail over her head, and she offering terse replies that deflate his poetic fancies until in the last stanza he concludes that the feminine is "The eternal enemy of the absolute" confuting "At a stroke our mad poetics" with her "air indifferent and imperious" (Eliot, *Complete* 19–20). And she replies, "Are we then so serious?" (20).

As critics have pointed out, the poem's subject and tone (and at least one of Eliot's lines) derive from Laforgue's "Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot," the entire text of which had been quoted in the Laforgue chapter of Julian Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) where Eliot had likely first encountered it. But the ironic tone of Laforgue's poem has a sharper edge than Eliot's (which shows a certain bemused fondness for the eternal feminine). Laforgue's begins with the speaker remarking grandly that his conversation with this particular woman should bring him up to date on the subject of Woman ("me mettre au courant de la Femme"). Exhibiting his chilliness of manner toward her, the speaker of Laforgue's

poem begins their imagined conversation on a high, mocking level of abstraction, noting, "La somme des angles d'un triangle, chère âme, / Est égal à deux droits" (Laforgue 114). To which the woman's imagined reply is "Dieu de Dieu! que je t'aime." The conversation continues, alternating between the woman's overwrought protestations and the man's ironic deflections until the final stanza: "Enfin, si, par un soir, elle meurt dans mes livres, / Douce; feignant de n'en pas croire encor mes yeux, / J'aurai un: "Ah ça, mais, nous avions De Quoi vivre! / C'était donc sérieux?" (Laforgue 114). Readers of Eliot will immediately recognize his adaptation of the stanza's first line for the first line of the last stanza of "Portrait of a Lady": "Well! and what if she should die some afternoon" (Eliot, *Complete* 11) and will note as well that the "Complainte"'s last line, "C'était donc sérieux?" has become "Are we then so serious?" at the end of "Conversation Galante," though in Laforgue's poem the line is spoken by the man and in Eliot's by the woman, with a different sense in each case. Just as Eliot's tone in "Conversation Galante" is less sarcastic than Laforgue's in "Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot," so Crane's in "In Shadow" has none of the man's self-mocking tone nor the slightly condescending attitude toward the woman found in Eliot's.

"In Shadow" is a mood piece but of a much higher order than "Pastorale." The meeting of the man and woman in the garden at twilight, their prospective embraces, and what comes after is subtly implied through images of the enfolding, the mingling and merging, of sunlight and shadow as the woman's "furtive lace and misty hair / Over the garden dial distill / The sunlight,—then withdrawing, wear / Again the shadows at her will" (10). The image of the sundial at twilight, when the passage of time has become visible with the loss of day, gives a carpe-diem feel to the couple's meeting, and their coming embrace is etherealized, displaced to the skies, as "Gently yet suddenly, the sheen / Of stars inwraps her parasol. / She hears my step behind the green / Twilight, stiller than shadows, fall" (10). Night is falling, but the pause enforced by the comma before *fall* puts even greater emphasis on a word already underlined by being in rhyme position, an emphasis meant to remind us of another fall associated with a garden, the same one evoked by the phrase "fallen harvest" in "Pastorale" and by the line "The apple on its bough is her desire" in "Garden Abstract." As the woman's parasol is inwrapped by the sheen of stars, so, we infer, will she herself soon be by the man's embrace, and in the last stanza, though we are told they speak to each other, only the man's voice is heard: "'Come, it is too late—too late / To risk alone the light's decline: / Nor has the evening long to wait—' / But her own words are night's and mine" (10). As shadow takes possession of sunlight, and night takes possession of day, so the man and the night take possession of the woman's words (not sharing them with the reader), suggesting another, more intimate possession of the woman that will occur in the night. Though "In Shadow" was influenced by Eliot's "Conversation Galante" and perhaps indirectly through that poem by Laforgue's "Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot," there is a sweetness to Crane's poem that is lacking in both Eliot's and Laforgue's,

a sweetness no doubt due in part to the fact that it was written by a seventeen-year-old. We should note that the poems about love that Crane published before mid-1923, poems such as "In Shadow," "Stark Major," and "Pastorale," always depicted heterosexual couples. It was only with the poems that began to appear after the start of 1924, poems in which love has a strongly narcissistic character such as "Possessions," "Recitative," "Legend," and the middle sections of "Voyages," that Crane began to feel comfortable evoking homosexual love, even in a somewhat veiled form.

The twelfth and thirteenth poems in *White Buildings,* "The Fernery" and "North Labrador," published in 1922 and 1919, respectively, are the two slightest pieces in the volume. As the young woman in "Garden Abstract" is imaginatively metamorphosed into a tree, so the older woman in "The Fernery" is evoked in terms of her green plants, the web-like tracery of her ferns resembling "The zigzags fast around dry lips composed / To darkness through a wreath of sudden pain" (11). The darkness of death to which the woman is composed is prefigured by the poem's opening image of "lights that travel on her spectacles" but "Seldom, now, meet a mirror in her eyes," her eyes already seeming deadened, and it contrasts with the sunlight that enters her room when the speaker happens "to lift a shade / Beside her and her fernery," allowing the speaker to notice the resemblance between the woman's wrinkles of pain and the pattern of her ferns. The poem ends with the image of "fresh sunlight" that "splinters humid green," emphasizing the contrary motions evoked by the moist, growing plants and the "dry lips" of the declining woman, contrary motions of growth and decay that leave the speaker "a nephew to confusions / That sometimes take up residence and reign / In crowns less grey—O merciless tidy hair!" (11). On the one hand, the image of the "crown" evokes the woman's hair, which she goes to the trouble of keeping tidily (i.e., mercilessly) arranged in spite of her declining years, while, on the other hand, (through the meaning of crown as "wreath") it sends us back to the lines "dry lips composed / To darkness through a wreath of sudden pain" to consider that that failing health will finally end with a funeral wreath. One suspects that the older woman in this poem was inspired by Crane's beloved maternal grandmother Elizabeth Belden Hart, who had evoked the earlier poem "My Grandmother's Love Letters," and thus that the speaker's "confusions / That sometimes take up residence and reign / In crowns less grey" may perhaps be a reference to the effect (a confusion of sexual object choice) that Elizabeth's daughter Grace had had on the speaker. (Grace was at once overly affectionate, needy, and imperious—contradictions in her personality resulting perhaps from heredity or upbringing and thus owing something to her own mother.)

If in "Garden Abstract" a woman imagines herself transformed into the natural world, in "North Labrador" a particularly bleak and forbidding part of the natural world is addressed as if it were a woman. This "land of leaning ice" that "Flings itself silently / Into eternity" is asked, "Has no one come here to win you, / Or left you with the faintest blush / Upon your glittering breasts? / Have you no memories, O Darkly Bright?" (11). One wonders whether this characterizing of a cold, isolated landscape as female

represents Crane's early sense of the way his mother's affection would at times suddenly be withdrawn as a means of manipulating her son. As we noted earlier, in the spring of 1928, Crane told his mother of his homosexuality, and later, describing to a friend Grace's reaction, he said that "for days afterward she seemed to him cold and contemptuous" (Unterecker 534), a reaction that led to his permanent break with her. In addressing the landscape as "O Darkly Bright," Crane invokes the same sense of fused or balanced opposites that we saw in "The Fernery," where the conjoined images of green growth and grey decay, the "humid" web-like ferns and the analogous wrinkles around the "dry lips" of the grey-haired woman, give rise to "confusions." The skies of north Labrador are described in the poem's second line as "plaster-grey," a color blending white and black, light and dark, likely representing for Crane the chromatic embodiment of "confusion." The ending of "North Labrador" gives further evidence of its link to "Garden Abstract": in the latter, just as the young woman, when she feels herself merging with nature, is said to have "no memory, nor fear, nor hope," so the eternal feminine landscape in the former poem is asked "Have you no memories?" The response is "Cold-hushed, there is only the shifting of moments / That journey toward no Spring— / No birth, no death, no time nor sun / In answer" (11). I would suggest that, besides the rhetorical similarity of their endings, both poems reflect Crane's awareness that the merging or fusion of opposites (of self and All, or self and Other in the case of the young woman and nature in "Garden Abstract," considered as a sort of mystical union or conjunction) amounted to a state of absolute stasis, of time circularized, flinging "itself silently / Into eternity," a meaningless "shifting of moments" that move toward "No birth, no death, no time nor sun." The two poems taken together exhibit the bright and dark sides of Crane's poetics: that the bright self-transcendence of "Garden Abstract" can also be the dark self-annihilation embodied in the landscape of "North Labrador," a barren landscape in which unrelieved brightness darkens the sight. It is a land that owes something of its imagining both to the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale" in *Moby-Dick* (with its image of "a wide landscape of snows," the "colorless, all-color of atheism," in which "the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud" [Melville 264]) and also to the ending of Poe's "Manuscript Found in a Bottle" and his *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym,* where voyages to the polar abyss consume their protagonist/narrators.

§ 4
"Repose of Rivers," "Paraphrase," "Possessions"

With "Repose of Rivers," the fourteenth poem in *White Buildings,* a poem written in 1926 and first published in September of that year, we enter the strongest portion of the volume. Like the ending of "The River" section of *The Bridge,* "Repose of Rivers" is structured as a journey down a river to a gulf (a journey explicit in the later poem and implied in the

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earlier), but whereas in "The River" this action is figured as a primal scene, with the Father of Waters in its "lengthening might" lifting "itself from its long bed" to be received by the open "embrace . . . of the stinging sea," in "Repose of Rivers" the journey becomes a figurative rite of passage for its speaker, a transit from adolescence to maturity, from the river constrained within its banks down to the freedom of the open sea. Crane mentions "Repose of Rivers" (under its original title "The Tampa Schooner") in a letter to Waldo Frank dated June 19, 1926, from the Isle of Pines, Cuba, as one of two short poems he'd been "cooking up" (464). The letter to Frank also gives details of Crane's nightmarish cruise to Grand Cayman Island on board a schooner, a cruise that began on June 3. Crane had gone to spend the summer of 1926 on his grandmother's plantation on the Isle of Pines in order to work on *The Bridge* but during May and June had been unable to make any headway on the poem. His confidence in the materials for his epic seem to have reached a low point by the time of the June 19 letter to Frank in which he says that "At times it seems demonstrable that Spengler is quite right" (464). (As we noted earlier, Hart had read Spengler's *The Decline of the West* at the start of his stay on the Isle of Pines.) Crane expanded on this sentiment in another letter to Frank the next day, saying that the form of his epic "rises out of a past that so overwhelms the present with its worth and vision that I'm at a loss to explain my delusion that there exist any real links between that past and a future destiny worthy of it. That 'destiny' is long since completed" (467). But then suddenly in the middle of July came that abrupt turnaround in Crane's confidence, both in his poetic powers and in the materials of his long poem that ushered in the most productive period in his poetic career.

In part this change in mood was due to his receiving word at the beginning of July that Horace Liveright, through the good offices of Eugene O'Neill, James Light, and Allen Tate, had in fact decided to publish *White Buildings,* an event that clearly renewed his sense of his own worth as a poet. But I would suggest that the other event that affected Crane's change of mood was his reading in May 1926 Lewis Spence's *Atlantis in America,* "the last book out on the subject and full of exciting suggestions" (462). One of the "exciting suggestions" that Crane found in Spence was, as we saw, the notion of an historical link between the inhabitants of the sunken island-continent of Atlantis and the Amerindian culture of central America through the figure of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, whom Spence refers to as "the last Altantean." Once this notion had had time to sink into Crane's consciousness—a process no doubt brought to a boil during the hellishly unpleasant voyage to Grand Cayman on a crowded, noisy, foul-smelling boat (a voyage that gave Crane firsthand experience of what Columbus's journey on the Santa Maria must have been like)—he would have seen in Spence's suggestion a way around Spengler. For if Spengler's contention in *The Decline of the West* is that Faustian culture (Western European culture from about the year 1000 AD onward) had entered its final, declining stage in which all the possibilities inherent in its arts had already been actualized, a stage of death-like cultural stagnation in which nothing remained

for the future but the repetition of previously perfected forms, then Crane would have seen that Spence's notion of an Atlantis-derived Amerindian culture offered him, as a poet native to the New World, an alternative to being trapped in the final phase of Faustian culture. As Crane imagined it, Amerindian culture, which had in Waldo Frank's words from *Our America* been "submerged" beneath the "flood" of white, European settlers, was one in which human beings, wed to their environment, cared for and cultivated the natural world rather than exploiting it, as Crane felt was all too often the case with Faustian culture. Consequently, the presence of this submerged Amerindian culture in the New World offered Crane scope for his visionary prophecy of its reemergence, Atlantis-like, up through the Spengler's dead sea of the Faustian.

It is against the background of Crane's experiences during the summer of 1926 and in light of the use to which he ultimately put the down-the-river-to-the-gulf scenario at the end of "The River" that "Repose of Rivers" can most fruitfully be read. The poem begins, "The willows carried a slow sound, / A sarabande the wind mowed on the mead. / I could never remember / That seething, steady leveling of the marshes / Till age had brought me to the sea" (11). The presence of the wind making a sound in the willows and leaving a visible trace on the mead and marsh by leveling the grass as it passes alerts us to both the vocal and the written aspect of the trope of the wind (the figure of poetic inspiration as the divine afflatus). And a large part of the poem's meaning will derive from the speaker's comparison in memory of the wind from the sea to the wind off a river, of an ocean breeze to an inland breeze. Since the stanza's last line associates coming of age with the sea, one assumes that the breeze off the river evokes the speaker's sense of his initial efforts at writing poetry, his adolescent capture by the poetic impulse, and that the breeze from the sea represents his sense of having achieved poetic maturity through the movement from constraint to freedom, a poetic freedom exhibited aurally in the skill with which the rhyme of *mead* and *sea* echoes this meaning, the shared vowel sound being contained or constrained within a closed syllable by the final consonant of *mead* and freed in an open syllable of *sea.*

As critics have noted, some of the first stanza's words and images were borrowed from chapter 58 ("Brit") of *Moby-Dick,* where Melville describes "vast meadows" (resembling "fields of ripe and golden wheat") of "the minute, yellow substance, upon which the Right Whale largely feeds" and continues, "As morning mowers, who side by side slowly and seethingly advance their scythes through the long wet grass of marshy meads; even so these monsters swam, making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea" (Melville 361). Crane's "slow sound," "mowed," "mead," "seething," and "marshes" echo Melville's "mowers," "slowly and seethingly," "marshy meads," and "grassy, cutting sound." It is perhaps another mark of Crane's awareness of his own mature artistic freedom that he makes imagery from the preeminent American novel of the sea dominate the recollection of his early poetic apprenticeship, a period symbolized by the inland breeze off the

river. Though Crane was depressed about his poetic powers and the subject matter of his epic when he wrote the June 19 letter to Waldo Frank in which he reported that he was "cooking up" "The Tampa Schooner," by the time the poem was published in *The Dial* in September of 1926 it clearly represented Crane's sense of his renewed poetic energy and of the unparalleled accomplishment that began in mid-July and continued into the early fall. And Crane's placement of "Repose of Rivers" as the lead-in to his strongest poems in *White Buildings* tends to confirm our sense of the poem as expressing Crane's awareness of an achieved mastery.

Besides the wind as a figure of inspiration, two other repeated images in "Repose of Rivers" (the willow tree and memory) mark it as a meditation on the progress of the speaker's poetic career. The willow is, of course, a tree associated with water, a tree that grows and thrives by waterways, on riverbanks and ponds, and it is also a tree associated with poetry through the figure of Orpheus. In *The Golden Bough,* J. G. Frazer comments on the link between Orpheus and the willow tree in a context that would have had particular significance for Crane in his work on *The Bridge.* If, says Frazer, the mistletoe can,

> as some of our peasants believe, open all locks, why should it not have served as an "open Sesame" in the hands of Aeneas to unlock the gates of death? There is some reason to suppose that when Orpheus in like manner descended alive to hell to rescue the soul of his dead wife Eurydice from the shades, he carried with him a willow bough to serve as a passport on his journey to and from the land of the dead; for in the great frescoes representing the nether world, with which the master hand of Polygnotus adorned the walls of a loggia at Delphi, Orpheus was depicted sitting pensively under a willow, holding his lyre, now silent and useless, in his left hand, while with his right he grasped the drooping boughs of the tree. If the willow in the picture has indeed the significance which an ingenious scholar has attributed to it, the painter meant to represent the dead musician dreaming wistfully of the time when the willow had carried him safe back across the Stygian ferry to that bright world of love and music which he was now to see no more. Again, on an ancient sarcophagus, which exhibits in sculptured relief the parting of Adonis from Aphrodite, the hapless youth, reclining in the lap of his leman, holds a branch, which has been taken to signify that he, too, by the help of the mystic bough, might yet be brought back from the gates of death to life and love. (Frazer 11:294–95)

Frazer references Pausanius's *Descriptions of Greece* (X, 30:6) as the source of his account of Polygnotus's fresco of the great dead in the underworld, and he relies on his readers recalling that in the *Aeneid,* Book 6, Virgil has Aeneas, before attempting his descent, invoke Orpheus (who "availed to summon his wife's shade, strong in his Thracian lyre and tuneful strings" [Virgil 1:515]) as one of his predecessors in the journey to Hades.

Since the willow was a tree sacred to Persephone, the consort of Hades and queen of the underworld, one assumes that if Orpheus carried, as Frazer says, "a willow bough to serve as a passport on his journey to and from the land of the dead," he carried it as an offering to Persephone, in

much the way that Aeneas had carried the golden bough of mistletoe. This connection between Orpheus, the willow, and Persephone may also reflect the legend that Orpheus had originally acquired his gift of eloquence when he touched a willow tree in Persephone's sacred grove at Delphi. And since it is precisely the eloquence of Orpheus's song that enchants Hades and Persephone, persuading them to relent and release Eurydice, the willow bough Orpheus carries to effect Eurydice's rebirth may well be a reminder to Persephone that it was from one of her sacred willows that Orpheus's poetic power was originally born. Moreover, given that the sounding box of ancient lyres was traditionally made of willow and given that Orpheus, after his failed rescue of Eurydice from the underworld, spends the rest of his short life singing mournful songs on his lyre for his lost wife, and given further that the weeping willow is a tree associated with mourning, there exists an additional network of associations between the tree, Orpheus, and Persephone. (One might also note in passing a well-known biblical linking of mourning, the willow tree, and another stringed, lyre-like instrument in Psalm 137: "1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof"—the same passage Eliot echoes in line 182 of *The Waste Land*: "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept.")

Now, if in the first stanza of "Repose of Rivers" the wind from the sea recalls for the speaker an earlier time when the rustling of the willows' leaves by the river wind had made audible the afflatus of poetic inspiration in the speaker's youth, then the association of willows with the poet Orpheus helps explain a key detail in the second stanza: "Flags, weeds. And remembrance of steep alcoves / Where cypresses shared the noon's / Tyranny; they drew me into hades almost. / And mammoth turtles climbing sulfur dreams / Yielded, while sun-silt rippled them / Asunder" (12). From the tranquility of the inland-river imagery of stanza 1, we are plunged suddenly into violent imagery evocative of the Gulf of Mexico. And if the legend of Orpheus, the poet who descended to the underworld and returned, lies behind the poem's down-the-river-to-the-sea structure, then we can see why Crane—in evoking a tropical sea in terms reminiscent of his voyage to Grand Cayman Island (a voyage on which, as he told Frank, he suffered terrible sunburn and thirst, developed two inner ear infections, and then was attacked by black clouds of mosquitoes on the island)—would characterize all this as his being drawn "into hades almost" and why the monstrous turtles would climb "sulphur dreams."

Moreover, just as the willow is linked to the figure of Orpheus, so too is the turtle, as Crane would have known from Bulfinch's *Mythology*. According to Bulfinch, "Mercury is said to have invented the lyre. He found, one day, a tortoise, of which he took the shell, made holes in the opposite sides of it, and drew cords of linen through them, and the instrument was complete. The cords were nine in number, in honour of the nine Muses. Mercury gave the lyre to Apollo, and received from him in exchange the caduceus" (Bulfinch 12). Bulfinch adds in a note, "From this origin of the instrument, the word 'shell' is often used as synonymous with 'lyre,' and

figuratively for music and poetry" (12 n.), and he gives an example of this from Gray's ode "Progress of Poesy." Bulfinch continues, "Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the Muse Calliope. He was presented by his father with a lyre and taught to play upon it, which he did to such perfection that nothing could withstand the charm of his music" (150–51). Indeed so closely was Orpheus identified with the lyre that upon his death Zeus directed the Muses to place Orpheus's lyre among the stars where, as we noted earlier, it remains as the constellation Lyra. Since the willow boughs Orpheus carried and the enchanting power of the songs he sang to his lyre's accompaniment had been his passports into and out of the world of the dead, it is only appropriate, given the poem's numerous references to willows, that the image of "climbing" up from a condition described as "hades almost" should be associated with turtles, the animal from whose shell the first lyre was created. (In the poem "O Carib Isle," written in August 1926 on the Isle of Pines, Crane again invoked the image of turtles and the enchanting power of the "shell": "Let not the pilgrim see himself again / For slow evisceration bound like those huge terrapin / Each daybreak on the wharf," and he concludes, "You have given me the shell, Satan,—carbonic amulet / Sere of the sun exploded in the sea" [77–78]. The violent imagery of the last line recalls Crane's description in "Repose of Rivers" of the "mammoth turtles" as the "sun-silt rippled them / Asunder," and where it was "hades" in that poem, it is "Satan" here, but with the "shell"—whether Orpheus's tortoise-shell lyre with its power to charm or an amulet as protective charm—being in either case a magical gift.)

But is there some resemblance between Crane and the mythical Orpheus (beyond their both being poets) that would account for Crane's obliquely alluding in "Repose of Rivers" to the ancient singer, some aspect of Orpheus's myth that particularly fits the down-the-river-to-the-sea scenario as depicting the rite of passage from poetic youth to maturity? Phrased in that way one sees immediately the connection, for the end of Orpheus's story is one of the best-known examples of such a scenario in Greek mythology. When Orpheus returns from Hades after having lost Eurydice for a second time, he is inconsolable, roaming the countryside alone and lamenting his dead wife. Finally, the frenzied women who worship Dionysus, the Bacchantes, "scorned by such devotion," as Virgil recounts in Book 4 of the *Georgics,* "in the midst of their sacred rites and the midnight orgies of Bacchus, tore the youth limb from limb and strewed him broadcast over the fields," tossing his severed head into the river Hebrus, where it was "swept and rolled in mid-current . . . , the bare voice and death-cold tongue, with fleeting breath, called Eurydice—ah, hapless Eurydice! 'Eurydice' the banks re-echoed, all adown the stream" (Virgil 1:233). The river Hebrus carried Orpheus's head down to the Aegean Sea and ultimately to the island of Lesbos, a journey memorialized in one of the most famous passages in Milton's *Lycidas*: "What could the muse her self that Orpheus bore, / The Muse her self, for her inchanting son / Whom Universal nature did lament, / When by the rout that made the hideous roar,

/ His goary visage down the stream was sent, / Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore" (Milton 448). Given our reading of the down-the-river-to-the-sea structure in "Repose of Rivers" as representing a rite of passage from adolescence to maturity and given that the traditional form of a rite of passage is a symbolic death and rebirth (a death to childhood and a rebirth to adulthood), the myth of Orpheus, containing many of these elements, would have offered Crane the perfect classical understory for his poem, much as Books 4 and 6 of the *Aeneid* did, respectively, for "The Dance" and "The Tunnel" sections of *The Bridge.* Like Aeneas, who descends to the underworld, meets the shade of his dead paramour Dido, and then returns to the world of the living, the poet Orpheus descends to the realm of the dead seeking to bring back his dead wife through the power of song and, failing to do so, finally reemerges into the world of the living. Then at last the poet himself undergoes in death a river passage to the sea.

In contrast to the Gulf or Caribbean imagery of stanza 2, all the images in stanza 3 are from the speaker's inland youth, images that evoke the birth of the poetic impulse and the young man's learning the craft of verse: "How much I would have bartered! the black gorge / And all the singular nestings in the hills / Where beavers learn stitch and tooth. / The pond I entered once and quickly fled— / I remember now its singing willow rim" (12). What these youthful poetic efforts would have been bartered for is that later condition of artistic maturity, freedom, and mastery figured by the wind from the sea, evoked in the contrasting second stanza. And the key images of the third stanza—the "nestings in the hills" and the "beavers who learn stitch and tooth"—evoke young creatures learning to build (fledglings to construct nests and beavers to build dams), alluding to the young poet who would name his first collection *White Buildings*. And just as the dam a beaver builds controls the flow of a stream, so the craft of verse a young poet learns controls the flow of song. That Crane had this in mind is suggested by the phrase "learn stitch and tooth," for while *tooth* obviously refers to the way a beaver gnaws the sticks to build a dam and *stitch* metaphorically evokes the way the beaver weaves the sticks together, Crane is punning, as we noted earlier, on *stitch* and *stich* (a line of verse, as in the English words *distich* or *stichomythia,* from the Greek root *stichos,* row or verse). Yet at the end of the third stanza, the young poet, daring to enter a larger body of water than a stream—the pond that foreshadows the freedom (and dangerous challenge) of the sea—quickly flees, apparently not yet experienced or disciplined enough in terms of craft for this venture, clearly a poetic one, given that the pond has a "singing willow rim."

Earlier I mentioned that besides the wind and the willow trees, another repeated image, memory, marked "Repose of Rivers" as a meditation on the progress of its speaker's poetic career. In stanza 4 the importance of memory to the poem's subject becomes clear:

> And finally, in that memory all things nurse;
> After the city that I finally passed
> With scalding unguents spread and smoking darts

The monsoon cut across the delta
At gulf gates . . . There, beyond the dykes

I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer,
And willows could not hold more steady sound. (12)

In Greek mythology the mother of the Muses is Mnemosyne (Memory), and since six of the nine sister Muses preside over various genres of poetry, Memory can be said to be the grandmother of this art, though more specifically she is the grandmother of the poet Orpheus, whose mother was Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry. The speaker's contention that "finally, in that memory all things nurse" suggests that the act of recollecting his progress (a recollection that creates the poem) from his earlier years of learning his art to his present mature power has been a nourishing, enabling experience, one that has allowed him to pass through difficulties (imaged as "the city . . . / With scalding unguents spread and smoking darts") and reach the freedom of the sea. And since the root meaning of the word *nurse* is "to nourish or suckle at the breast," its use in conjunction with memory suggests the notion of both the muse-as-mother (specifically of the poet Orpheus) but also as a mother figure for all poets, and of the mother of the Muses (Mnemosyne). Certainly, the fourth stanza's explicit invocation of memory is meant to reverberate back through the third stanza's "I remember now its singing willow rim" to the second's "And remembrance of steep alcoves" and finally to the first's "I could never remember."

Although New York was the city whose difficulties Crane had survived in the months immediately before going to the Caribbean for the most successful summer of creativity in his life, we know that when he came to use the down-the-river-to-the-gulf scenario in *The Bridge,* "the City storied of three thrones" (45) which he passed was New Orleans. Certainly, the image of "the delta / At gulf gates" in "Repose of Rivers" suggests that Crane already had in mind the ultimate geographic locale for this scenario in his epic. As we noted earlier, the image of passing through a gateway, a narrow strait, leading from one stage of life to another (a characteristic representation of a rite of passage) was a recurring figure in Crane's work. That it is specifically a "monsoon" ("a periodic wind especially in the Indian Ocean") that "cuts across the delta / At gulf gates" not only evokes a powerful and perilous form of sea wind as a figure of achieved artistic mastery (recall that Crane, besides his hellish sea journey to Grand Cayman, endured a hurricane during his 1926 stay on the Isle of Pines); it also plays on the ultimate origin of the word *monsoon* in the Arabic *mawsim,* "season," thus suggesting why in the poem's penultimate line the sea wind that ripples the sapphire water is equated with a season, is said to be "like this summer." For the period in 1926 that Crane spent on the Isle of Pines was not only a time of mature freedom in his poetic craft, it was also a time when he was free just to write poetry, free from the necessity of earning a living to pay rent since he was staying in his grandmother's house and being cared for by the housekeeper, Aunt Sally Simpson.

The image of "the dykes" (beyond which the speaker hears the sea wind

"flaking sapphire") refers back to the implicit image of the dam the beavers build with "stitch and tooth," for just as we read this as an image of a young poet's learning his craft as a way of regulating the flow of song, so the large man-made dykes, as a way of channeling a great river's flow or holding back the sea, become a figure of the mature poet's craft by which the sea wind and the surge of inspiration are regulated to produce a lapidary surface. Similarly, the blue of the sea rippled by the wind "flaking sapphire" refers back to the color green implied in the poem's first stanza. There the wind rustles the willows, mows the mead, and levels the marshes, the leaves of the first and the grasses of the latter two all being the same color, and appropriately so, since Crane is evoking a time when he himself was still green in terms of his craft. Given the implied image of leaves and grass as what the wind moves, one wonders whether the early poetic influence of Whitman on Crane is being evoked here through Whitman's prime symbol and the title of his ongoing work. One might also wonder whether Crane's decision to associate the freedom of the sea wind with his poetic maturity prompted him to recollect his early career in imagery taken from the great American novel of the sea, to balance as it were the early influence of Whitman against the later influence of Melville. In that same June 19 letter to Waldo Frank, he said, "I read *Moby Dick* between gasps down in Cayman—my third time—and found it more superb than ever" (465).

If we are right in seeing in the implicit image of the leaves and grass in the first stanza an allusion to Whitman, then we can perhaps see here another veiled reference to Orpheus, see what prompted Crane to layer the myth of Orpheus beneath "Repose of Rivers." Recall that in the final "Prospects" section of *Nature* (1838) Emerson says he will conclude with "some traditions of man and nature, which a certain poet sang to me; and which, as they have always been in the world, and perhaps reappear to every bard, may be both history and prophecy" (1:70). Emerson then "quotes" two lengthy passages, ending the first with "Thus my Orphic poet sang" (1:72) and beginning the second "Then shall come to pass what my poet said" (1:75–76). Emerson was himself the author of these quotations, and thus his fictive Orphic poet was a prospective figure, one that Emerson hoped his own writings would call forth to establish an American tradition of poetic orphism, a quasi-mystical poetic tradition adumbrated in Emerson's two quotations from the fictive poet. Emerson believed he had found the Orphic poet his writings had evoked when he read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* published some seventeen years after *Nature.* And the reputed founder of the ancient Greek mystical religion of orphism was, of course, the singer Orpheus. The notion of Whitman being Emerson's prophesied "Orphic poet" sheds light, as we noted earlier, on Whitman's role as the poetic quester's elder brother in "Cape Hatteras," as a psychopomp conducting the quester toward that final prophetic vision of the Bridge in "Atlantis." In "Atlantis"'s twelfth stanza, the bridge's cables, strung with lights and seen against the night sky (presumably with the stars of the constellation Lyra in the background), are described as "orphic strings," and in the last line of the preceding stanza the quester exclaims, "Atlantis,—hold

thy floating singer late!"—the mythic archetype of an island receiving and holding a floating singer being the journey of Orpheus's "severed head," cast into the river Hebrus, that "floated singing to Lesbos" (*Oxford* 758).

The image of the wind rustling the leaves of the willow begins and ends "Repose of Rivers," the sound of the sea wind rippling the sapphire water being compared to that of the wind through the willows, which "could not hold more steady sound." But if the trope of the wind figures the breath of the god filling the poet as in*spir*ation (recall that in the "Language" section of *Nature* one of the etymological examples Emerson gives to prove that "every word" for "a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root" is "borrowed from some material appearance" is the word "spirit" which "primarily means *wind*" [1:25]), then the concomitant of this notion is that the divine breath of inspiration must be exhaled by the poet in singing his songs, which is to say, the notion of poetic song as ex*pir*ation, as a little death foreshadowing the greater one, that final expiration by which, as the ancients believed, the spirit departs the body by being breathed out through the mouth. Crane was familiar with this notion from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" where the poet says,

> for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath;
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy! (Keats 292)

Crane perhaps knew the legend (which he could have seen in the entry on Orpheus in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [1911]) that, though Orpheus's head had been buried on the island of Lesbos and a shrine built over it, the Muses had "gathered up the fragments of his body and buried them at Leibethra below Olympus, where the nightingales sang over his grave" (*Britannica* 20:328). At any rate, given that Orpheus's journey down a river to the sea was one he made in death, one gets the sense that the repose that rivers offered the poem's speaker was, as Paul Mariani observes in his biography of Crane, that they led to the ocean that "waited patiently, whenever he was ready, to claim" him as "her own" (Mariani 226) and that this was the reason "Repose of Rivers" was placed so as to lead into "Paraphrase," the fifteenth poem in *White Buildings,* a poem in which Crane imagines what it is like to die.

Written sometime around October 1924 and first published in September 1925, "Paraphrase," like "Stark Major," employs images of the bedroom and of the coming of dawn, but while "Stark Major" is about "the lover's death," the little deaths of parting at daybreak and of sexual intercourse, "Paraphrase" is about imagining one's own real death, about coming up with an image for that total absence of images entailed by an annihilation of consciousness. Since thinking the absence of thought is impossible,

Crane's effort to do this in a poem can only be a "paraphrase," a putting into other words of a condition essentially wordless. The poem begins with someone waking suddenly from sleep: "Of a steady winking beat between / Systole, diastole spokes-of-a-wheel / One rushing from the bed at night / May find the record wedged in his soul" (12). At night in bed a person is most likely to become aware of his heartbeat, of that steady contraction and expansion of the muscle inside one's chest, and if systole and diastole are figured as spokes of a wheel, then that empty space between the spokes when the heart is neither contracting or expanding, when it is preparing to go from one to the other, is a self-contained little death prefiguring the final moment when the heart will be unable to go from one to the other. This instant between the two opposite movements that constitute the heart's beat is itself described as a "steady winking beat," and this instant of non-movement and what it ultimately foreshadows Crane describes as a "record wedged in his soul," the language suggesting this awareness of death within us as a sharp, foreign object stuck in the chest. But if this winking instant of stasis is described as "steady," then one can see the connection between "Paraphrase" and the poem that immediately precedes it, for "Repose of Rivers," ending with an image of windblown willows that "could not hold more *steady* sound," is a poem based on the reciprocal movements not of systole and diastole but of inspiration (the breath of the god filling the poet) and expiration (the poet's singing), with the exhalation of the poet's breath in song prefiguring that final breathing out of the poet's soul. This link between the two poems becomes even clearer in "Paraphrase"'s second stanza: "Above the feet the clever sheets / Lie guard upon the integers of life: / For what skims in between uncurls the toe, / Involves the hands in purposeless repose" (12).

The word *repose* only occurs in the title of "Repose of Rivers," not in the poem itself, and since "Repose of Rivers" was "the final poem" Crane "would add to *White Buildings*" (Mariani 225), one wonders whether his giving it its present title rather than its original one ("The Tampa Schooner") and placing it next to "Paraphrase" in the collection was to annex the clear sense of "purposeless repose" as death in "Paraphrase" to that down-a-river-to-the-sea scenario with its Orphic allusions in "Repose of Rivers." The image of the sheet suggests both a bedsheet above a sleeping body and the sheet over a corpse in the morgue. Clearly, the "what" that "skims in between" sheet and body, like that moment of stasis "between / Systole, diastole" in stanza 1, is death, uncurling the toe and involving "the hands in purposeless repose" (with the former phrase understood as a negation of the idiomatic expression "to curl your toes," which evokes a living body's reaction to an exciting experience). One might note that "Paraphrase" almost subliminally presents its subject matter (i.e., that it is a *poet* imagining his own death) through the number of words in the first two stanzas that can also refer to writing metrical verse—*beat, feet, sheet*. This same dynamic of inferential mention also sheds light on what is perhaps the most connotatively charged phrase in stanza 2: the notion that "the clever sheets / Lie guard upon the integers of life." The English word *integer* means "a

whole" or "any of the natural numbers." Since the sheets are said to cover the feet and hands (and thus the toes and fingers, the digits) and since *digit* in English can mean "any of the Arabic numerals" or "any of the divisions in which the limbs of . . . all higher vertebrates terminate," then the phrase "integers of life" evokes the fingers and toes in their numerical associations, both as the original method of counting and as still the earliest method of learning to count in childhood. Moreover, that "the clever sheets / Lie guard" upon these "integers" calls up an image of transferring numbers to a sheet of paper as a way of keeping count, of summing up what the "whole" amounts to, precisely the kind of reckoning up of a person's life that occurs at one's death.

But the Latin *integer* (the root of the English word), besides meaning "whole," can also mean "honest," "upright," "unblemished," and the phrase "integers of life" seems to echo (and indeed may have been suggested to Crane by) the opening words of one of Horace's most famous odes (I:22): "Integer vitae scelerisque purus" (64). The Loeb Classical Library edition of Horace (1914) translates the line: "He who is upright in his way of life and unstained by guilt" needs, as Horace continues, no further protection against mortal dangers as he goes through the world. Giving an example from his own life, he continues, "For as I was singing of my Lalage [Horace's mistress] and wandering far beyond the boundaries of my farm in Sabine woods, unarmed and free from care, there fled from me a wolf, a monster such as not martial Daunia nurtures in her broad oak forests, nor the parched land of Juba, nurse of lions, breeds" (Horace 65). Given the connection between "Repose of Rivers" and "Paraphrase," one cannot help but be struck by the link between Horace's poem underlying the latter and the myth of Orpheus underlying the former, for just as the poet Horace goes singing through the woods and a wild beast that he encounters does not harm but rather flees from him, so one of the key elements in Orpheus's myth was that, as he went singing his enchanting songs through the countryside, he had the power to charm wild beasts and render them harmless. Whether we consider Horace's "Integer vitae" as source or allusive background for Crane's "integers of life," it is clearly in keeping with his practice of layering classical texts beneath his poems, and one can imagine Crane savoring the contrast of upright and supine, respectively, between the translation of the Latin phrase and the context of his English one.

In stanza 3 Crane evokes the speechlessness of death as a figure for the unspeakableness of imaging one's own death, yet he does this in language that obliquely alludes to writing: "And from its bracket how can the tongue tell / When systematic morn shall sometime flood / The pillow—how desperate is the light / That shall not rouse, how faint the crow's cavil" (13). The "bracket" image draws on two meanings of the word: a support for something (in this case the tongue) that extends outward and a mark used in writing to enclose parenthetical matter (perhaps matter in apposition as in a paraphrase) or in mathematics to enclose an expression to be treated as a whole unit, suggesting the image of a corpse's open mouth as an empty bracket summing up a whole life, with its mathematical meaning

resonating back to the phrase "integers of life." The morning light flooding the pillow suggests dawn (the time that calls for an aubade), but here the tongue cannot speak, let alone sing, and the bird's cry is not a rooster's (which ought to awaken a sleeper at daybreak) but a crow's, a bird traditionally associated with carrion in English poetry.

In the final stanza the dawn light that fails to rouse is described as a stunning "antarctic blaze," echoing the imagery of deathly stasis and blinding whiteness in "North Labrador," two poems before "Paraphrase," and recalling the white curtain of mist that ends Pym's journey to the South Polar abyss in Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym,* a work (like his story "Manuscript Found in a Bottle") whose implicit subject is whether one can make a conscious incursion into the unconscious realm of death and return with word of what the experience is like. In both the novel and the story, the narrator is prevented from seeing beyond the border of life to learn that "never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment in destruction" (Poe, *Collected* 2:145), and in the novel the white mist that prevents Pym's looking into the realm of death evokes the blankness of the work's final page as the narrative suddenly breaks off at the polar abyss. The whiteness of the "antarctic blaze" recurs in that "white paraphrase," which the dead man's "head, unrocking to a pulse, already / Hollowed by air, posts . . . / Among bruised roses on the papered wall" (13). The dead man's state is compared not to a living thing (a real rose) but to its lifeless representation printed on paper (another oblique allusion to writing and to the poem itself) and to a "bruised" rose at that. The word *bruise* derives from the Old French *br(u)isier,* to break, and ultimately from the Gallic *brus-, bris-,* to beat. That ultimate etymological root would then resonate back (through death being depicted as an "unrocking" of the pulse's beat as it peters out) to the first stanza and that death-like moment of stasis "between / Systole, diastole" that is described as "a steady winking beat"—the colors white and bruised rose evoking the pallor of death, the lividity of oxygen-starved blood (red turned blue) showing through the skin of a corpse.

"Possessions," the sixteenth poem in *White Buildings,* was written sometime between the fall of 1923 and the spring of 1924 and first published that spring, the disjunctiveness of its imagery making it one of the most difficult poems in the collection to interpret on a line-by-line basis. Not that one cannot grasp its general meaning; it is a meditative evocation of its speaker's sexuality as a form of "possession" in several senses: a drive to possess the objects of the speaker's lust and equally a drive by which the speaker is possessed, and the memories of those sexual encounters are the only possessions left to the speaker. As in "Legend" that sexual drive is seen as something excessive, humiliatingly painful, and possibly self-destructive but also as the libidinal energy that drives his creativity. The poem begins with an imperative and with an image familiar from the opening and ending of "My Grandmother's Love Letters"—a rainy night:

> Witness now this trust! the rain
> That steals softly direction

And the key, ready to hand—sifting
One moment in sacrifice (the direst)
Through a thousand nights the flesh
Assaults outright for bolts that linger
Hidden,—O undirected as the sky
That through its black foam has no eyes
For this fixed stone of lust . . . (13)

Like the rain in "My Grandmother's Love Letters" that blotted out the stars and left the speaker without guideposts, so the night rain in "Possessions" "steals softly direction," a displacement of the speaker's confusion onto his surroundings. The speaker is apparently out walking at night in search of a casual sexual encounter, and this is but one of "a thousand nights the flesh / Assaults outright for bolts that linger / Hidden" that the speaker remembers. This search, this "sifting," is clearly not without danger. It may require "One moment in sacrifice (the direst)," require that the speaker take the first step in such an encounter, risking either a humiliating rejection or an outright beating, a moment of uncertainty as to whether the speaker will find a receptive other and what role (male or female) he will play in such an encounter. Given the uncertainty and possible danger of the speaker's nocturnal prowling, the imperative that opens the poem teeters among hope, bravado, and irony. (One might note in passing the general resemblance of the poem's setting, as the record of a night time ramble through a city, to works such as Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and William Blake's "London.") The "bolts that linger / Hidden" may refer to lightning bolts hidden in the "black foam" of the rainy sky or a bar that slides into a socket to latch a door or an arrow (usually from a crossbow), but each involves the notion of penetration or piercing, and thus suggest "bolts" as a phallic image, like "the key, ready to hand." We might also note that "bolts" as arrows accords with that earlier image of the city's "smoking darts" which the speaker had passed in "Repose of Rivers" two poems earlier. The two together point forward to the figure of Maquokeeta tied to a stake and shot full of arrows in *The Bridge,* while all three suggest the representation of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian in Mantegna's famous painting, an image with a special significance for Crane's sexual orientation. The first stanza ends with the speaker out wandering the streets, looking for someone unknown who may or may not be there, but with the speaker's lack of direction again displaced onto the scene as the "undirected sky . . . has no eyes / For this fixed stone of lust." This last image evokes the speaker's sexual possession as something heavy, immovable, and unchanging but prepares for the poem's ending, where the image of the stone will go through a redemptive transformation.

Stanza two begins with the speaker counting up in memory such moments of sexual obsession to make "a total of this trembling tabulation" and then evokes the speaker's knowledge of the kind of signals that indicate a willing partner in a sexual encounter with a stranger: "I know the screen, the distant flying taps / And stabbing medley that sways— / And mercy,

feminine, that stays / As though prepared" (13). With the word *stabbing,* the image of penetration begun with "bolts" continues, while the mention of "mercy, feminine" is, one suspects, the real "screen" here, making one possible reading of this sexual encounter the speaker's picking up a female prostitute and thus screening the poem's homosexual subtext.

This screening continues in stanza 3's opening lines: "And I, entering, take up the stone / As quiet as you can make a man." The line seems to evoke the speaker's having found a receptive partner and entering a room or dwelling for a sexual consummation (the other sense of "entering"), but the phrase "make a man" clearly was chosen by Crane because it has two possible meanings, one meant to screen the other—on the one hand, the phrase can refer to a heterosexual encounter in which a child is engendered and, on the other, to the speaker's having intercourse with a man. In the next lines of stanza 3, the undertone of penetration continues: "In Bleecker Street, still trenchant in a void, / Wounded by apprehensions out of speech." One senses that "Bleecker," a street in Greenwich Village, is also the bleaker street into which the speaker has emerged after this encounter, a foreshadowing of all those bleak streets he will prowl in search of anonymous sex. The phrase "still trenchant in a void" evokes something sharp and cutting in an empty space, an image with both a physical and a psychological component, the latter being the feeling of emptiness after such a random encounter that leaves the speaker wounded out of speech (unable to write?) by apprehensions, the fearful foreknowledge, of a lifetime of such meaningless encounters. The speaker says, apparently referring to the "fixed stone of lust," "I hold it up against a disk of light— / I, turning, turning on smoked forking spires, / The city's stubborn lives, desires" (13). I take it that the "smoked forking spires" are the skyscrapers of Manhattan evoked as if they were spits on which the lives and desires of city dwellers, the speaker among them, were turning and burning. That the speaker holds the stone of lust up against the disk of the sun, exposing it in broad daylight, figures the speaker's self-conscious confrontation with, his public exposition of, his sexual possession in the poem.

With the image of the "smoked forking spires" transformed into the horns of a dilemma in the final stanza, the speaker admits that "Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies, / Lacks all but piteous admissions to be spilt / Upon the page whose blind sum finally burns / Record of rage and partial appetites" (14). That the same libidinal drive can be both destructive and creative, can drive Crane's obsessive homosexual promiscuity on the one hand and his poetry writing on the other, constitutes the horns of the dilemma on which the speaker "bleeding, dies," but one might also say that the real dilemma the speaker confronts, as in this poem, is that the memories of this very sexual promiscuity constitute for the poet some of his most highly charged, most powerful imaginative material, the piteous admissions "to be spilt / Upon the page." Note that Crane's use of the word *spilt* in this context would seem to have a sexual resonance, recalling the word used in the King James version of Genesis 38:9 to describe Onan's act in refusing to carry out God's command to give his seed to his dead brother's wife. Onan

"spilled it on the ground," for which God slew him. When the speaker says that these piteous admissions spilt on the page constitute the "blind sum" that "finally burns / Record of rage and partial appetites," he is echoing the accounting imagery at the opening of stanza 2 ("Accumulate such moments to an hour: / Account the total of this trembling tabulation"). This notion of a totaling up or summing up, of a final reckoning, continues the counting imagery begun by the phrase "integers of life" in "Paraphrase" and ushers in the apocalyptic imagery of the poem's last three lines: "The pure possession, the inclusive cloud / Whose heart is fire shall come,—the white wind rase / All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays" (14). The speaker's memories of his promiscuous encounters are humiliating and tormenting, a painful foreboding of the possibly self-destructive end of his compulsive sexual obsession, but the speaker (and Crane) might also claim that this sexual quest among many partners, this "sifting," has been driven by a desire to find one to love totally and be loved by totally in return, to find a perfect love whose paradigm would be the love of God. Hence, the sudden irruption of imagery from the book of Revelation (the cloud, the fire, the wind, whiteness, the bright stones) to figure the hoped-for transformation of the "fixed stone of lust" into a final "pure possession" (the idealized state of possessing and being possessed totally).

There are several passages in Revelation that Crane probably had in mind as the allusive background for this imagery: The second coming of Jesus described in 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him"; the further description of Jesus's glorified person in 1:14–15: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"; and in particular this promise to the righteous in 2:17: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (a secret name only God and the individual know as a token of the intimate knowledge of the loved one by the lover). We should note in passing that Crane's familiarity with this imagery from Revelation shows up again in "O Carib Isle!" where he links the images of whiteness, stones, naming, and death: "I count these nacreous frames of tropic death, / Brutal necklaces of shells around each grave / Squared off so carefully. Then // To the white sand I may speak a name, fertile / Albeit in a stranger tongue. Tree names, flower names / Deliberate, gainsay death's brittle crypt" (77). Revelation's image of the white stone inscribed with the individual's secret name points forward to the promise in 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God . . . and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." So Jesus will give the individual a white stone with the individual's new secret name and will write on him the name of God and of God's city, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus's new name—a linking of the inscribed white stone with the image of the new Jerusalem that points forward to

chapter 21 (where the heavenly city is described) and particularly to verses 18 through 21, where the twelve types of "bright stones" that garnish the foundations of the city's walls are named.

Crane does not evoke this imagery from the book of Revelation for any religious reasons, nor because he foresees his being saved from an obsessive sexual possession by a return to God. Rather, he invokes it as a model for his own poetic project, invokes it as an archetypal instance of the imagination's creating an idealized image of perfect love's final and complete consummation. For, if "the stone of lust"—and by implication the city's stone towers, those "smoked forking spires" on which the speaker and "the city's stubborn lives, desires" are spitted and turning—is to be transformed, it is not to be by confession and repentance (he has said in "Legend," "I am not ready for repentance"). The speaker's aim in exposing his sexual obsessions in the poem is to transform (in the very act of confronting them) these excesses into material for poetry, to use the divine afflatus, the white wind of inspiration, to raze the stone towers of the old city and build something like a new Jerusalem of the imagination that, like its model in Revelation, is garnished with "bright stones" to construct the white buildings of his poems. But the transformation, which the speaker contemplates, of that "fixed stone of lust" does not aim to incinerate or sublimate the physical into some illusory metaphysical realm or afterlife. Rather, it projects the image of a hoped-for, totally fulfilling physical love in this world, the sort of "pure possession" Crane thought he'd found when he met Emil Opfer Jr. in 1924 and which he memorialized in "Voyages." Physical love lurks beneath the surface of the imagery Crane borrowed from Revelation, as can be seen in "Possessions"'s last line and a half, for though "bright stones" can be seen as an allusion to the jeweled foundations of the new Jerusalem, *stones* is also a slang word for testicles, which gives another, more sexual meaning to "wherein our smiling plays."

§ 5
"Lachrymae Christi"

If "Possessions" attempts to transform the "fixed stone of lust" into material for poetry—in effect to translate the speaker's sexual excess, by means of an imaginative act, into "a pure possession"—then the next poem in *White Buildings* seeks to redeem another aspect of Crane's excessive behavior (his alcoholism) by figuring this intoxication as Dionysian. "Lachrymae Christi," the seventeenth poem in the collection, was written sometime between February 1924 and April 1925 and first published in December 1925. Its title, as we noted earlier, means "tears of Christ," the name of an Italian wine made from grapes grown on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. The poem is dominated by the figure of Dionysus, the Greek dying-and-reviving, vegetative deity whose life was an embodiment (and thus whose myth an explanation) of the changing seasons, with Crane's interpretation of Dionysus being largely influenced by his reading of Nietzsche and Pater.

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In *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche theorizes that Greek tragedy began through the interaction of two contrary deities in the Greek psyche: Apollo is the god of reason and logic, of the confines of the city and the limits of the self, "the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*" (36), and Dionysus is the god of instinct and ecstasy, of the countryside and of an ecstatic intoxication that overwhelms the limits of the individual self through a sense of identification with the primordial unity of all things. For Nietzsche, Apollo and Dionysus represent the two "separate art worlds of *dreams* and *intoxication,*" as embodied, respectively, in "the Apollinian art of sculpture" and "the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music" (33), and the interaction of these deities in tragedy represents the translation of Dionysian wisdom into Apollinian dream images. In tragedy the principal of individuation is raised to its highest pitch in the figure of the hero only to have that exalted individual selfhood finally overwhelmed. From this spectacle, according to Nietzsche, the audience experiences tragic joy through the realization that though individual lives must always be destroyed, Life (*Bios*) is an inexhaustible source always creating new forms, and through the further realization that as individuals "we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art—for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (52). One can imagine the attraction for Crane of the notion that art and not morality is the sole justification of existence.

For Nietzsche, Dionysus is preeminently an embodiment of the "primal unity" as "eternally suffering and contradictory" (45) and thus responsive to the Greek sense of "the terror and horror of existence," as expressed in the folk wisdom of "Silenus, the companion of Dionysus," who, when asked what was best for man, replied that the best was "not to be born" and "the second best . . . to die soon" (42). As a suffering deity associated with ecstatic intoxication and thus with all aspects of viniculture, Dionysus would have had a special appeal for Crane, representing as it were the classical archetype of all those suffering figures in his poetry with whose torment Crane seems to have identified when intoxicated. Nietzsche asks, "How is the world of the Olympian gods related to this folk wisdom" of Silenus, and he answers, "Even as the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his suffering" (42). He goes on to explain that it was in order to "endure" the terror and horror of existence that the Greeks had to "interpose" between themselves "and life the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians" (42). The Dionysian artist having "identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction," produces a copy of this "primal unity as music," but then "under the Apollinian dream inspiration, this music reveals itself to him again as a *symbolic dream image*. The inchoate, intangible reflection of the primordial pain in music, with its redemption in mere appearance, now produces a second mirroring . . . The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process. The image that now shows him his identity with the heart of the world is a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere appearance" (49).

For Nietzsche, the Apollinian dream image was a redemptive illusion by which the Greeks protected themselves from the nihilism and attendant nausea that would have otherwise resulted from the horror of existence. Arguing that "Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself," Nietzsche contends that "all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage—Prometheus, Oedipus, etc.—are mere masks of this original hero, Dionysus." He continues:

> the one truly real Dionysus appears in a variety of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero, and entangled as it were, in the net of the individual will . . . the hero is the suffering Dionysus of the Mysteries, the god experiencing in himself the agonies of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and now is worshiped in this state as Zagreus. Thus it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering,* is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself. From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man. (73)

And from that final sentence sprang imagery that was central not only to "Lachrymae Christi" but to "The Wine Menagerie" and "Recitative" and also in some degree to "Passage" and "Possessions."

At the beginning of *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche introduces the relationship between the Apollinian and the Dionysian as that "tremendous opposition" (33) between the finite, bounded imagery of sculpture and the nonimagistic art of music, but by the end of the book he has come to view the interrelationship of the two as being more like a mutually constitutive bipolar opposition such as that between right and left or self and mirror image: "Thus the intricate relation of the Apollinian and the Dionysian in tragedy may really be symbolized by a fraternal union of the two deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo, finally the language of Dionysus, and so the highest goal of tragedy and of all art is attained" (130). But as Nietzsche came to see the Dionysian and the Apollinian art impulses as being linked in a fraternal union, in a mutually constitutive opposition he would designate with the sole word *Dionysian,* he judged that the real opposition in Greek life was not between two art impulses but rather the one exhibited by the difference between the Old Tragedy of Sophocles and Aeschylus and the New Tragedy of Euripides—the opposition between the Dionysian and the Socratic, between the Dionysian wisdom that existence and the world are justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon and the Socratic dialectic that finds the meaning of life in reason and ever-increasing knowledge. Later in Nietzsche's career he would see this as the opposition between art and morality, between an aesthetic justification of existence and a moral one, and he would represent this symbolically as the opposition of "Dionysus versus the 'Crucified'" in his notebooks (*Will* 542), "*not* a difference in regard to their martyrdom" but "a difference in the meaning of it": "whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning" (543).

With its very title, "Lachrymae Christi" suggests the link between the tears of Dionysus from which "sprang man" and those of the Crucified by which man was redeemed from death, between the Greek wine god and the Christian god who changed wine into his blood, but in Crane's poem the relationship between the two figures is evoked both as a differential opposition (in the manner of Nietzsche) and as a reemergence of the figure of the classical god from that of Jesus, whose image in the history of Christianity had taken on some of the attributes and imagery of Dionysus. The poem opens with the imagination's transfiguring power once again evoked as moonlight: "Whitely, while benzine / Rinsings from the moon / Dissolve all but the windows of the mills / (Inside the sure machinery / Is still / And curdled only where a sill / Sluices its one unyielding smile)" (14). Since the colorless chemical benzine is a solvent, moonlight, figured as the moon's white benzine rinsings, is imagined as dissolving the buildings (and perhaps cleansing the landscape of a human presence), dissolving all except the windows, which either reflect the real moonlight or let in the figurative white liquid of the imaginative moonlight as through a sluice. But once inside the mill the white liquid moonlight turns milky, curdling the still machinery and turning the windowsill into an immovable smile. The poem's title, alluding to a wine that includes the image of tears and the name of a god, along with the first stanza's "unyielding smile" set up the tears/smile conjunction in the context of a wine god, a conjunction resonating in Nietzsche's memorable sentence about Dionysus's smile and tears and preparing for the recurrence of this conjunction later in the poem. Moreover, in using the image of moonlight-as-liquid-solvent to evoke the imagination's transfiguring power, Crane also prepares for a further development of the liquid-solvent image as applied to alcohol, the liquid that dissolves the individual self's isolation and that gives through intoxication a sense of the primordial unity, a further development of the image that is implicit in "Lachrymae Christi" but explicit in "The Wine Menagerie" and in the "Cutty Sark" section of *The Bridge.* Given the context of Dionysian intoxication, one wonders whether one of the mills referred to in stanza 1 made cider.

From human structures transfigured by moonlight in the first stanza, Crane shifts the poem's focus to the surrounding landscape and the season (spring) in the second. For a vegetative dying-and-reviving god like Dionysus and for Jesus who was resurrected at Easter, spring is the season of rebirth, and in describing the spring Crane mingles words and images that evoke both figures: "Immaculate venom binds / The fox's teeth, and swart / Thorns freshen on the year's / First blood. From flanks unfended, / Twanged red perfidies of spring / Are trillion on the hill" (14). Dionysus's myth embodied the cycle of the seasons from death in winter to rebirth in spring, but Nietzsche saw Christianity as translating the Dionysian promise from a physical to a metaphysical level, making the promise of the continuation of life after death not a matter of the general continuation of *Bios* but one of personal survival. Yet, says Nietzsche, Dionysian wisdom represented for the ancient Greek the knowledge that "his entire existence

rested on a hidden substratum of suffering" (46) and that his end was personal annihilation.

Dionysus was both a *dying* and a reviving god. Like Shelley's west wind, he was a preserver but also a *destroyer,* he was the god of nature's rebirth in spring but also of the natural cycle of predation and death. What we see in stanza 2's evocation of spring is Crane's linking of words with Christic associations ("immaculate," "thorns"), alluding to the metaphysical comfort of an illusory personal survival, to images of nature "red in tooth and claw" ("fox's teeth," "the year's first blood," "flanks unfended") that evoke the physical reality of death even in the midst of renewed life. In describing the hillside, Crane evokes the trillion red flowers coming into bloom there as if they were drops of blood from the un(de)fended "flanks" of an animal that had been clawed and bitten. Crane would have known that panthers and tigers were animals associated with Dionysus (they were described by Nietzsche as drawing the god's chariot [37]). And this implied image may also owe something to Eliot's lines about the coming of spring in "Gerontion": "In the juvescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger // In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas / To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk" (*Complete* 21–22).

Since "May is Mary's month" as Hopkins says in "The May Magnificat," one gets the further sense that Crane means for the spring rebirth he evokes to be read against the allusive background of the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception. (Recall that he has this image in mind in stanza 9 of "To Brooklyn Bridge," where among the stanza's Marian imagery he included the phrase "immaculate sigh of stars, / Beading thy path—condense eternity.") Nietzsche considered the Christian notion of personal survival a destructive illusion, considered the notion of an afterlife, of the otherworldly, as something that always convicted this world and its physical life of inadequacy and guilt in comparison, an illusion that prevented individuals from valuing the reality of this world and this one life. The influence of Nietzsche's opposition between Dionysus and the Crucified can be seen in the lines "Immaculate venom binds / The fox's teeth," for if the word *Immaculate* evokes the notion of a physical birth (the Virgin's) as being metaphysically exempt from the ultimate sanction of death imparted by original sin, and thus evokes, by implication, the Christian notion of personal survival (an implication that seems inevitable given the suggestion of Christ's crown of thorns in the next two lines: "and swart / Thorns freshen on the year's / First blood"), then to associate the word *immaculate* and all it connotes with the word *venom* is in effect to suggest that the notion of personal survival in an afterlife, a notion that would void the natural cycle of predation ("binds / The fox's teeth") and the Dionysian reality of death as annihilation, is a venomous notion, a poisonous illusion destructive of life. And this reading is reinforced at the stanza's end by Crane's image of the red flowers on the hill as "red perfidies of spring." The flowers' redness is associated with "the year's first blood," with the drops that sprang both from Christ's crown of thorns and from the "unfended flanks" of nature, figured as the haunches of an animal clawed and bitten. But these red

flowers are said to be "perfidies" (breaches of faith, treacheries), and Crane intends that meaning in two senses. On the one hand, though they are examples of the renewed life of the natural world, as flowers they live only a short time, and the very brevity of their lives and thus of their promise of new life can seem like a betrayal to human beings that want immortality. On the other hand, since the root of the word *perfidy* is the Latin *perfidia,* faithlessness, these short-lived flowers that eternally recur in other flowers every spring, demonstrating the truth that Life persists even though individual lives cease as part of a natural cycle, constitute in effect countless acts of faithlessness to a religious belief that teaches personal survival. Crane's use of *trillion* to evoke the multitude of red flowers on the hill will be echoed in the "Southern Cross" section of *The Bridge* to characterize the fecundity of nature that insures Life's survival no matter how many individual lives are lost. There he uses the word in the context of Christianity's illusory promise of personal immortality ("The Cross, a phantom, buckled—dropped below the dawn / Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn" [62]).

Before leaving stanza 2, we should focus on one other word that serves as a bridge to the imagery of the third stanza. Crane describes the red flowers as "Twanged red perfidies of spring," as if their sudden bursting into bloom were like, or had been caused by, plucking the string of a musical instrument. As we saw, Nietzsche associated Apollo with the art of sculpture and the bounded visual image and Dionysus with music. Indeed, the original title of Nietzsche's work had been *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music.* Nietzsche's sense of music as a philosophical entity was influenced both by Wagnerian opera and by Schopenhauer's discussion of music in *The World as Will and Representation,* particularly by the latter's contention that while all the other arts were mediate copies of the world-will (i.e., copies of the world-will's phenomenal objectifications of itself in the individual things of nature and the world), music was an immediate copy of the world-will itself, the world-will being that principle of ceaseless change and constant motion, of endless coming-to-be and passing-away of phenomena, that drives the arrow of time. And music's immediate representation of the world-will as motion/emotion makes clear that Schopenhauer imagined it by analogy with the human will. Nietzsche says, "According to the doctrine of Schopenhauer, . . . we understand music as the immediate language of the will . . . Dionysian art therefore is wont to exercise two kinds of influences on the Apollinian art faculty: music incites to the *symbolic intuition* of Dionysian universality, and music allows the symbolic image to emerge *in its highest significance.* From these facts . . . I infer the capacity of music to give birth to *myth* (the most significant example), and particularly the *tragic* myth: the myth which expresses Dionysian knowledge in symbols" (103).

Music is said to incite "to the *symbolic intuition* of Dionysian universality," and *intuition* is the key word here. The world-will, considered as the thing in itself, as the primordial unity (the Dionysian universality) beneath

all phenomenal appearance, is—for post-Kantian philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—understood as something unavailable to discursive reason, something only to be reached through intuition, an intuition revealing the world-will's essence as analogous to that of the human will. This intuition is incited by music in its specific character as motion/emotion by raising the world-will's analogous essence to the level of aesthetic contemplation. Nietzsche continues,

> it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual. For it is only in particular examples of such annihilation that we can see clearly the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art, which gives expression to the will in its omnipotence, as it were, behind the *principium individuationis,* the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and despite all annihilation. The metaphysical joy in the tragic is the translation of the instinctive unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images: the hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is negated for our pleasure, because he is only phenomenon, and because the eternal life of the will is not affected by his annihilation. "We believe in eternal life," exclaims tragedy; while music is the immediate idea of this life. (104)

If for Nietzsche Dionysus represents the eternal recurrence of physical Life (as opposed to the Crucified, who represents the personal survival of individuals in an afterlife), and if music is the immediate idea of that Dionysian eternal recurrence, one can see why Crane evokes the rebirth of life in the sudden blooming of spring flowers as something "twanged" into existence like the string of a lyre, and why this musical image leads immediately into another in the third stanza: "And the nights opening / Chant pyramids,—/ Anoint with innocence,—recall / To music and retrieve what perjuries / Had galvanized the eyes" (14). To begin understanding the stanza's odd initial image, how "nights opening" could "chant pyramids," we must consider for a moment another source of Crane's knowledge about Dionysus that we mentioned earlier—Walter Pater's essay "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew." Pater recounts the story of Dionysus's double birth and explains that the details of this story are personifications of the growth of the grapevine, that they commemorate

> the double birth of the vine god; . . . his birth, first of fire, and afterwards of dew; the two dangers that beset him; his victory over two enemies, the capricious, excessive heats and colds of spring. He is . . . fire-born, the son of lightning . . . And his second birth is of the dew. The fire of which he was born would destroy him in his turn, as it withered up his mother; a second danger comes; from this the plant is protected by the influence of the cooling cloud, the lower part of his father the sky, in which it is wrapped and hidden, and of which it is born again, its second mother being, in some version of the legend, Hyé—the Dew. (*Greek* 25–27)

What the vine god's association with fire and dew also implies is that the grape concentrates within itself heat (either from the sun or from volca-

nic ground, as Pater notes) and moisture from the sky and that these two together, when the grape is crushed and its juice fermented, create a fiery liquid that warms and enlightens those who consume it.

Knowing Pater's association of Dionysus with fire and dew, we can begin to appreciate the connotations of the imagery in the third stanza. As we saw earlier, the root of the word *pyramid,* according to *OED,* was "anciently explained by some as" a derivation of the Greek "πῦρ, πυρ-," *pyr-* fire (*OED* 2:2376). Illustrating the widespread acceptance of this old derivation, the *OED* cites Milton's image in *Paradise Lost* of Satan springing up like a "Pyramid of fire" (II, 1013) and Inigo Jones's statement in *Stone-Heng*: "That Fire hath the Form of a Pyramis is evident" (*OED* 2:2376), the shape of a pyramid suggesting the tip of an enduring flame. Now if "the nights opening / Chant pyramids— / Anoint with innocence" and if the verb *anoint* suggests the application of a liquid, then the characteristic kind of anointing the night performs is the application of dew to the earth. Between the *pyr*amid image and the anointing image Crane has connoted the two entities Pater associates with Dionysus—fire and dew.

But what does Crane mean by saying "the nights opening / Chant" these things? First of all, consider that pyramids at night point upward toward the stars, a fact poetically alluded to by Milton in his sonnet "On Shakespear": "What needs my *Shakespear* for his honour'd Bones / The labour of an age in piled Stones / Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid / Under a Star-ypointing *Pyramid*" (yet another of the examples cited in the *OED* entry for the word). Consider further that if a pyramid as a monument to the dead is meant to reproduce the shape of a living flame in enduring stone, what that stone flame points toward at night is those points of fire in the sky, the eternal stars—the perdurable on earth indicating the eternal in the heavens. No wonder, then, that in ancient Egyptian lore the pyramids were thought to be the initial step on the pathway leading a pharaoh's soul to his home among the stars, or that the Great Pyramid of Cheops and the two smaller pyramids associated with it in the Giza necropolis replicate on earth the relative size (judged by their relative brightness), as well as their position in relation to each other, of the three stars that make up the belt of the constellation Orion. So we have associations linking pyramids (whose longevity is a synecdoche for immortality) to the eternally recurring stars in the night sky, and with that we can see that "the nights opening / Chant pyramids" is meant to be understood by analogy with a well-known image like that in Job 38:7 about the creation of the world "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But the deity that "the nights chant" for in Crane's poem is not Jehovah or the Christian god but that classical deity older than Jesus who is returning with the spring. (Crane's attention may have been drawn to this image of the stars singing by a remark of Pater's in his essay "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone," a companion piece to "A Study of Dionysus" in *Greek Studies*. Pater, in discussing how some artists can personify a symbolic meaning so convincingly "that we hardly think of distinguishing between the image . . . and the meaning of the image," cites "William Blake" who, "to our so great

delight, makes the morning stars literally 'sing together'" [*Greek* 99–100] in his painting "Jacob's Ladder.")

Just as Nietzsche had announced the death of god and had tried to reanimate the classical worldview that in the West preceded the moral worldview of Judeo-Christian religion, so D. H. Lawrence in *The Plumed Serpent,* as we noted earlier, had portrayed a movement to reanimate in Mexico the ancient Aztec religion of Quetzalcoatl in the wake of the failure of the religion of Jesus and had seen this same return of the old gods as something that might occur in many nations when people learned "to speak again with the tongues of their own blood." Crane had read *The Plumed Serpent* the year after he wrote "Lachrymae Christi," but his reading of Nietzsche would have already prepared him for Lawrence's story of the return of an old god.

We can appreciate the nuances in Crane's version of this theme, the reemergence of the figure of the old god Dionysus from that of the newer god Jesus, in the subtle implications of the pyramid image in stanza 3. One of the significations of the image is a tomb, a memorial to an important person who has died but whose existence the monument means to render endlessly enduring, a signification that implicitly evokes the human desire for individual immortality that Christianity represents. But contained within that signification, like the form to its matter, is the fact that the shape of a pyramid is the shape of a fire, with all that the constantly moving tip of a flame evokes of Dionysus, the fire-born deity, whose art is the temporal art of music and whose wisdom is that more ancient one of the survival of Life through the eternal recurrence of countless individual lives, each of which must end in annihilation. With one signification emerging out of the other, the old god has returned, the chant of spring nights opening "recall / To music" (the Dionysian art) and "retrieve what perjuries" (the illusion of personal survival) had "galvanized our eyes," had coated them with an opaque film (like zinc attached by a electric current to a surface) and rendered them blind to the truth.

The image of Dionysian music continues in the fourth stanza in conjunction, as we saw earlier, with the process that transforms dead bodies back into living matter: "While chime / Beneath and all around / Distilling clemencies,—worms' / Inaudible whistle, tunneling / Not penitence / But song, as those / Perpetual fountains, vines,—" (14). The worms' tunneling aerates the soil allowing the grapevines to grow, and these tunnels are imagined as conduits that feed the perpetually recurring fountains of the vines that bring the moisture back above ground, to be contained within the grapes. This process is evoked as a sort of dissolving or liquefying of dead matter as it is eaten by the worms and made alive again in their bodies, a dissolving that recalls stanza 1's dissolving power of the benzine-like moonlight as a figure of the imagination. In figuring this natural redemption of death into life, Crane makes clear the difference of the Dionysian worldview from the Christian, of the artistic justification of human existence (which sees the death of individuals as an inevitable part of the cycle of nature) from the moralistic justification (which sees the death of

individuals as the punishment for original sin), the difference between art (song) and morality (penitence). And in the single line of the next stanza the merciful aspect of this natural process—the "clemencies," the reprieve, that the worms "distill" by aiding the growth of the grape whose juice will be fermented into wine—is balanced against the merciful aspect of Jesus, who transformed wine into his redeeming blood: "Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes." But with the pun on tinder/tender we see once again the image of the fire-born Dionysus emerging through the image of the savior who promised the tender mercy of individual salvation. This image of fiery eyes points back to the lines at the end of stanza 3 about retrieving "what perjuries had galvanized the eyes," for Crane understood the Dionysian wisdom that came with wine's fiery intoxicating effect as the breaking down of the self's isolation, an en*light*enment that burned away the film from the eyes to reveal the truth of existence.

Crane would return in stanza 7 to this image: "Names peeling from Thine eyes / And their undimming lattices of flame, / Spell out in palm and pain / Compulsion of the year, O Nazarene." Here the names peeling from the flame-like eyes evoke the burning away of that illusion of differentiation regarding the primordial unity, the Apollinian illusion that this unity can be parceled out into individual persons and objects possessing separate names. And the image of "palm and pain," of a tree and suffering, meant to connote Christ on the cross points forward to the eighth stanza where the image of the crucified Jesus merges with the image of the grapes on the vine as part of the dismembered Dionysus. But lurking within the phrase "palm and pain" is the same dual reference to Jesus and Dionysus that evoked (as we observed with the tinder/tender pun and with the image of fire at the root of the word *pyramid*) the emergence of the latter from within the image of the former. On the one hand, "palm and pain" echoes a line from Rudyard Kipling's well-known hymn-like poem "Recessional" in which the Judeo-Christian God is addressed as the Lord of Hosts: "God of our fathers, known of old, / Lord of our far-flung battle-line, / Beneath whose awful Hand we hold / Dominion over palm and pine— / Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, / Lest we forget—lest we forget!" (147). But on the other hand, the palm tree, with its trunk soaring upward and its fronds bending back toward the earth, has the shape of a fountain jetting water into the air, and Crane explicitly makes this comparison in "Royal Palm," one of the poems in the *Key West* sheaf: the palm tree "grazes the horizons, launched above // Mortality—ascending emerald-bright, / A fountain at salute" (84). Given Crane's sense of the palm tree's shape resembling a fountain, we can see that the palm reference in stanza 7 is a Dionysian allusion, pointing back to the grapevines in stanza 4 that are described as "these / Perpetual fountains, vines" (14). This resemblance between palm and grapevine is further underlined by Crane's use of the same color to evoke each. In "Royal Palm" the fountain-like tree is said to be "emerald-bright," while in the eighth stanza of "Lachrymae Christi" the nights that "strike from Thee perfect spheres, / Lift up in lilac-emerald breath the grail / Of earth again." Finally, in stanza 7 the poem's evocation of a god's

death and rebirth is understood as symbolizing something vegetative and seasonal, as representing in effect the "Compulsion of the year" (15).

In between the references to the "Nazarene" in stanzas 5 and 7, Crane interposes a stanza whose difficulties only become clear in light of a Dionysian subtext: "(Let sphinxes from the ripe / Borage of death have cleared my tongue / Once and again; vermin and rod / No longer bind. Some sentient cloud / Of tears flocks through the tendoned loam: / Betrayed stones slowly speak.)" (15). One might account for the presence of the sphinx in this stanza as simply an extension of the Egyptian imagery evoked by the pyramid reference in stanza 3, and while I think the evocation of Egypt as an allusive background is important for understanding the meaning of "vermin and rod / No longer bind," the sphinx reference is probably best approached by looking at Nietzsche's discussion in *The Birth of Tragedy* of the tragic hero Oedipus. He asks, "What does the mysterious triad of these fateful deeds"—that "Oedipus" is "the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, the solver of the riddle of the Sphinx"—"tell us?" (68). He says,

> We must immediately interpret this to mean that where prophetic and magical powers have broken the spell of present and future, the rigid law of individuation, and the real magic of nature, some enormously unnatural event—such as incest—must have occurred earlier, as a cause . . . It is this insight that I had expressed in that horrible triad of Oedipus' destinies: the same man who solves the riddle of nature—that Sphinx of two species—also must break the most sacred natural orders by murdering his father and marrying his mother. Indeed, the myth seems to wish to whisper to us that . . . Dionysian wisdom . . . is an unnatural abomination: that he who by means of his knowledge plunges nature into the abyss of destruction must also suffer the dissolution of nature in his own person. (68–69)

Recall that the Sphinx's riddle was "What creature walks on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?" and that if the person to whom the riddle was posed could not answer, the Sphinx killed him. Oedipus solved the riddle, whose answer was "man"—the creature who crawls on all fours as an infant, walks on two legs as a young man, and walks with a cane in old age—and his solution caused the Sphinx to kill itself. But note that Nietzsche calls this riddle whose answer is "man" the "riddle of nature," posed by "the Sphinx of two species," implying that part of the riddle of man's nature is that man is also a creature of two species, midway between the animal and the divine, sharing something of each. Nietzsche attributes to Oedipus as the solver of this riddle the ability to overstep the "rigid law of individuation" and, by implication, even the limits of species individuation by exhibiting in his godlike divination of the riddle's answer "prophetic and magical powers." Nietzsche further suggests that Oedipus, as a transgressor of natural limits, demonstrates that Dionysian wisdom—the wisdom that all such natural limits are illusory phenomena compared to the primordial unity—involves "some enormously unnatural event," an "unnatural abomination." In Oedipus's case that unnatural

activity involved patricide and incest, but one can imagine that, given the way homosexuality was categorized in Crane's day, the notion of Dionysian wisdom as involving something unnatural would have given it a further, more personal resonance for the poet.

As we suggested earlier, part of the point of "Lachrymae Christi" was that Crane set out to evoke (and thus explain, if not excuse) one aspect of his excessive behavior (his frequent bouts of drunkenness) as Dionysian intoxication—that divine sense of the unity of all things that came when alcohol had dissolved the self's sense of its own isolation, its difference or separation from the world—an intoxication necessary to fuel his visionary poetry. Nietzsche makes the point in *The Birth of Tragedy* that Dionysian art, "in its intoxication, spoke the truth" and that those who in the wine god's rites "succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states" saw that "*Excess* revealed itself as truth. Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out from the very heart of nature" (46–47). But Nietzsche does not limit the forms of Dionysian excess to intoxication. Describing Dionysian rites throughout the ancient non-Greek world, he writes, "these festivals centered in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed" (39). So in "Lachrymae Christi" the Dionysian mantle Crane casts over his alcoholic excesses seems meant to cover as well the sexual excesses to which he was subject when intoxicated—a double indemnity, as he suggested in "Legend."

In stanza 6 the poem's speaker claims that the sphinxes' action clears his "tongue," with the apparent purpose of letting him speak the truth, evoking the sphinxes' action as the removal of a blockage or, more precisely, as the solving of a riddle for the speaker, a solving foreshadowed by the dissolving power of the imaginative moonlight in stanza 1 and by the solving/dissolving/liquefying imagery of the worms' action in stanza 4. It is precisely the association of the sphinx with what Nietzsche calls "the riddle of nature"—a riddle whose answer is man and that would thus seem to be, by implication, the riddle of man's relation to nature, his place within the endless natural cycle of coming to be and passing away—that the sphinx image in stanza 6 connotes. This action of clearing the tongue so that the poet can speak the truth parallels the action implied in stanzas 4, 5, and 7 where in drinking the Dionysian wine, the poet, enlightened by the fiery liquid that burns away the galvanized coating of "perjuries" covering his eyes, sees the truth of Dionysian wisdom. The parallel between the actions of seeing the truth in stanza 4 and speaking it in stanza 6 is further underlined by the fact that in each case the poem implies that the action occurs as the result of imbibing a liquid, of drinking a solution.

The speaker says the sphinxes have cleared his tongue once and again "from the ripe / Borage of death," borage being an herb of medicinal value, often used, as the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes, to make "cordials" that either reduce fever, aid digestion, or clear the palate. As stanza 4's "perpetual fountains, vines" whose grapes become wine are imagined as resulting from a revivifying process driven by the aerating ac-

tion of worms below ground, so the plant called *borage,* which can also be turned into a drink like wine, results from this same process of the worms' "tunneling" (hence the pun on *borage*), their boring into dead flesh and restoring it to life. The sphinxes (symbolizing the answer to the riddle of man's relationship to nature and thus to death) are said by Crane to have cleared his tongue (as would the drinking of a palate-clearing cordial made from borage) from the "ripe / Borage of death" (the worms' eating into dead flesh) so that he can speak the truth of Dionysian wisdom that nature will come back to life in the spring. This truth has freed him from the illusion of personal survival, the illusion of death as a punishment for original sin, so that he can proclaim, "vermin and rod / No longer bind." The image of "vermin and rod," taken with the Egyptian resonance of "pyramids" and "sphinxes," evokes the plagues of vermin and the rods of Moses and Aaron by which Moses secured the release of the Israelites from Egypt, and thus by implication the Mosaic law and the Judeo-Christian religion. That these are said to "No longer bind" sends us back to Crane's earlier use of the word *bind* in stanza 2: "Immaculate venom binds / The fox's teeth"—the word *Immaculate* evoking the image of a birth without the stain of original sin and by implication the poisonous illusion that death is a punishment for such sin, this religious illusion being said to "bind" the natural predation represented by the "fox's teeth," i.e., to bind the true sense of death as part of the cycle of nature.

The primordial unity of all things, the sense of nature as a single living body, grounds the concluding imagery of the stanza: "Some sentient cloud / Of tears flocks through the tendoned loam: / Betrayed stones slowly speak" (15). The rain or dew figured as the tears of a sentient cloud fall on an earth figured as a tendoned body, the "tears" evoking both Jesus (through the wine "tears of Christ") and Dionysus (through Nietzsche's saying that from the tears of Dionysus "sprang man"). That this vivifying moisture pervades nature reveals that even those objects that seem most inanimate (like stones) are in fact sentient, that the distinction between the dead and living, the animate and inanimate, is, as the Orphic poet Whitman never tired of affirming, an illusion, one that drops away through the power of Dionysian intoxication. The imagery of the sentient cloud and the stones that speak may also reflect the influence of the ending of *The Birth of Tragedy,* where Nietzsche imagines one being "carried back into an ancient Greek existence," as "if only in a dream," to see Apollo descending "wrapped in a cloud" and to walk "under lofty Ionic colonnades, . . . finding reflections of his transfigured shape in the shining marble at his side," that is, in statues that seem to speak a "language of gestures" (144). But of course in any Crane poem we can't discount the possibility that if nature is evoked as a body, the vivifying moisture may well have been imagined as seminal fluid—in which case the "stones" that come to life may have the same sexual referent we noted for this image at the end of "Possessions."

In stanza 8 Crane superimposes the image of the crucified Jesus on that of the grapes: "Lean long from sable, slender boughs, / Unstanched and luminous. And as the nights / Strike from Thee perfect spheres, / Lift up

in lilac-emerald breath the grail / Of earth again—" (15). If earth is imagined as a body, then it is the body of a dying and reviving god, and the wine from the crushed grapes is imagined as that body's blood, hence the word *unstanched* (the figurative blood flow renewed or unstopped each spring) and hence the reference to the grail (the cup in which Jesus changed wine into his blood at the Last Supper). But here it is specifically "the grail / Of earth," not the cup of Jesus, that comes to life again, the image of an eternally recurring seasonal revival emerging through the Christian image. That the spherical grapes, imagined as drops of blood, are described as "luminous" connects them to those "perfect spheres" (presumably spherical celestial bodies glowing in the night sky), with the image of the sacred body expanding from this world to universal nature. One thinks of the famous lines from one of Crane's favorite poets, Marlowe, in *Doctor Faustus*: "See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament! / One drop would save my soul—half a drop!" And the spherical image recalls as well the medieval description of God as an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, an image that anticipates the lines in the "Ave Maria" section of *The Bridge*: "This disposition that thy night relates / From Moon to Saturn in one sapphire wheel." Once again, given that we are dealing with a Crane poem, we cannot discount the possibility that the image of a sacred, suffering body having its "perfect spheres" struck from it by night may well have the same sexual referent as the "stones" in stanza 6, particularly if we consider the merging of the images of Jesus and Dionysus and the fact that in one version of his myth Dionysus is dismembered by the Titans.

Indeed, it is precisely this detail of Dionysus's myth that Crane alludes to in the poem's final stanza, where the ancient god's name appears for the first and only time in the poem: "Thy face / From charred and riven stakes, O / Dionysus, Thy / Unmangled target smile" (15). Dionysus's smile balanced against the "sentient cloud / Of tears" in stanza 6 completes the conjunction Crane found in Nietzsche's smile and tears image, while the "charred and riven stakes" allude to the fire-born Dionysus's first birth: the incineration of his mother Semele's dwelling when her lover Zeus appeared to her in the form of lightning, a mythic detail symbolically commemorating one of the activities of viniculture, the annual burning back of the grapevines to increase their heartiness. The mangling of Dionysus, implied by the fact that the reborn god's smile is "unmangled," is something Crane knew of from Pater. Noting that one "phase of the worship of Dionysus had its special development in the Orphic literature and mysteries" (50), Pater gives the Orphic version of a backstory for Dionysus's origin: the god was

> Son, first, of Zeus, and of Persephone whom Zeus woos, in the form of a serpent—the white, golden-haired child, the best-beloved of his father, and destined by him to be the ruler of the world . . . But one day, Zeus, departing on a journey . . . left him . . . Then it came to pass that the jealous Here sent out the Titans against him. They . . . miserably slew him—hacking his body

> to pieces, as the wind tears the vine, with the axe *Pelekus* . . . The fragments of the body they boiled in a great cauldron, and made an impious banquet upon them, afterwards carrying the bones to Apollo, whose rival the young child should have been, thinking to do him service. But Apollo, in great pity for this his youngest brother, laid the bones in a grave, within his holy place. Meanwhile, Here, full of her vengeance, brings to Zeus the heart of the child, which she had snatched, still beating, from the hands of the Titans. But Zeus delivered the heart to Semele; and the soul of the child remaining a while in Hades, where Demeter made for it new flesh, was thereafter born of Semele—a second Zagreus—the younger, or Theban Dionysus. (*Greek* 51–52)

Pater returns to the subject of orphism and the figure of Dionysus in his essay "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone," noting that "Under the influence of this Orphic poetry, . . . the romantic figure of Dionysus Zagreus, Dionysus *the Hunter,* that most interesting, though somewhat melancholy variation on the better known Dionysus, was brought, as son or brother of Persephone, into her [Demeter's] circle, the mystical vine, who, as Persephone descends and ascends from the earth, is rent to pieces by the Titans every year and remains long in Hades, but every springtime comes out of it again, renewing his youth" (*Greek* 128).

The entry on Orpheus in the eleventh edition of the *Britannica* attests to the "close connexion between" the figures of Dionysus and Orpheus in Greek mythology and religion, particularly regarding their dismemberment. The entry cites Frazer and notes that "Orpheus, in the manner of his death, was considered to personate the god Dionysus, and was thus the representative of the god torn to pieces every year, a ceremony enacted by the Bacchae in the earliest times with a human victim, afterwards with a bull to represent the bull-formed god. A distinct feature of this ritual was ὠμοφαγία [homophagia] (eating the flesh of the victim raw), whereby the communicants imagined that they consumed and assimilated the god represented by the victim, and thus became filled with the divine ecstasy" (*Britannica* 20: 328). To the extent that the figures of Dionysus and Orpheus are linked, so too are Crane's "Repose of Rivers" (with its allusions to the myth of Orpheus) and "Lachrymae Christi" (with its explicit references to Jesus and Dionysus), Dionysus's incorporation into the mystical Orphic religion (whose reputed founder was the singer Orpheus) suggesting the way imagery associated with Dionysus was incorporated into the religion of Jesus. One cannot help but note, for example, the relationship of the Orphic/Dionysian meal (in which the communicants imagined they consumed and assimilated the body of the dismembered god) to the Last Supper (in which Jesus turned bread and wine into his body and blood and gave it to his disciples to eat so they could become part of the mystical body of Christ). In this connection one also recalls the early Christian depiction of Christ as Orpheus (on the basis of their both having descended into hell and returned), as in the fourth-century AD fresco in the Catacombs of Peter and Marcellus in Rome, an association of Christ with the figure of Orpheus that had been made as early as the second century by Clement of Alexandria.

One other detail in the *Britannica* entry on Orpheus sheds light on a puzzling image in "Lachrymae Christi": noting that the "most probable" derivation of the name Orpheus connects "it with *ὀρφ-* ('dark' . . .)," the entry continues, "In accordance with this, Orpheus may have been originally a god of darkness; or the liberator from the power of darkness by his gift of song; or he may have been so called because his rites were celebrated by night . . . S. Reinach sees in him the fox roaming 'in the darkness,' to the Thracians a personification of the wine-god, torn in pieces by the Bassarae (fox-maidens)" (*Britannica* 20:328). (The Solomon Reinach [1858–1932] cited here, a well-known French archaeologist and art historian, is probably best known to readers of modern poetry from his being mentioned in the "Medallion" section of Pound's *Mauberly*.) Given that the wine god Orpheus was imagined by the Thracians to be "the fox roaming 'in the darkness,'" one can appreciate the further significance of the imagery in stanza 2: that "Immaculate venom" (with all it connotes of Christian belief) "binds / The fox's teeth."

§ 6
"Passage"

The eighteenth poem in *White Buildings,* "Passage," written in mid to late 1925 and first published in July 1926, is linked in terms of theme and imagery to "Lachrymae Christi," "Possessions," and "Repose of Rivers." Part of the power of the poems from "Repose of Rivers" onward to the volume's end is that the accumulating connections between them create a shared allusive and connotative background that multiplies the meaning of each individual poem. By that same token the network of associations provides crucial hints for deciphering obscure lines and images in any individual poem. The very title "Passage" evokes a transit from one place to another or from one state of life to another, suggesting its relation to the rite of passage scenario implicit in "Repose of Rivers." The poem begins: "Where the cedar leaf divides the sky / I heard the sea. / In sapphire arenas of the hills / I was promised an improved infancy" (15). As in "Repose of Rivers" the contrast here is between the inland world and the sea, between the water the speaker can hear in the distance and a space enclosed by hills (an arena). But where the color "sapphire" was associated with the sea in the earlier poem, the wind rippling the water described as "flaking sapphire" (12), here the color describes the hills. Now, if "sapphire" is Crane's equivalent of the French symbolists' *l'azur,* the blue that symbolizes the imagination, then its use in these two poems marks the land and sea as not just imagined settings but settings symbolic of the imagination itself, with the speaker's passage through this landscape evoking the development of the poet's imagination. That the cedar leaf "divides" the sky implies a division to be crossed, from one state of life to another. (One thinks of Stevens's description of the sky in "Sunday Morning" as "this dividing and

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indifferent blue" [Stevens 6].) Recall that the assonance linking the words *mead* and *sea* in stanza 1 of "Repose" had suggested, through the same vowel sound's presence in a closed syllable in the former word and an open syllable in the latter, a comparison between the enclosure of the river by its green, meadowy banks (evoking the constraints of the green poet's immature craft) and the openness of the blue sea (representing his attained, mature freedom), but in "Passage" the assonantal slant rhyme of *sky* and *sea* (both blue entities and both indicative of freedom) and the further rhyme of *sea* and *infancy* points to a somewhat different rite of passage—a movement from childhood to maturity but to a maturity that in effect circularizes the poet's journey by restoring childhood innocence.

If the poet's imaginative maturity holds out the promise of an "improved infancy," where was that promise made? One thinks of Wordsworth's ode "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," where the poet contends that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!" (154) and that it is precisely our memories "of early childhood," "those first affections, / Those shadowy recollections" which "Are yet the fountain-light of all our day, / . . . a master-light of all our seeing," that enable us to recover some measure of original innocence and of the sense of the deathlessness of the soul:

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. (157)

This scenario of an adult remembering his early childhood (figured as being "inland far" but still able to catch a glimpse of "that immortal sea" and "hear the mighty waters rolling evermore") resembles closely enough the situation evoked in the first stanza of "Passage" (the speaker, though inland, hearing the sea and in this setting being promised "an improved infancy") for Wordsworth's poem to be a likely source of the high Romantic promise Crane invokes. But since Wordsworth's poem is precisely about the way early childhood memories intimated, indeed, seemed to confirm, the personal immortality of the soul and since Crane placed "Passage" right after "Lachrymae Christi," a poem in which, if our reading is correct, he opposes the Christian notion of personal survival to the Dionysian sense of physical Life's eternal recurrence at the cost of individual annihilation, opposes them so as to opt for the latter over the former, then one would expect that in "Passage" Crane would have a more ambivalent attitude toward memory if it carried a Wordsworthian association of validating personal survival. And that is exactly what we find in the poem's second stanza. (Of course, Wordsworth's is precisely the presence one could have predicted in a poem like "Passage," which evokes the development of the poet's imagi-

nation as a rite of passage from childhood to maturity, for Wordsworth had pioneered this subject matter in his epic *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*.)

The second stanza begins: "Sulking, sanctioning the sun, / My memory I left in a ravine,— / Casual louse that tissues the buckwheat, / Aprons rocks, congregates pears / In moonlit bushels / And wakens alleys with a hidden cough" (15). This initial image of memory as something negative that the speaker wishes to abandon reflects Crane's sense of the debilitating effect of his own unhappy childhood memories and of those more recent memories of alcoholic and sexual excess, hence, the faculty's being characterized as a parasitic insect that eats away at the source of nourishment. But Crane also knows that memory is the mother of the Muses and has a crucial relationship to the art of poetry, aiming to render persons, places, and events lasting in memorable words that outlive the person who wrote them. Both the positive and negative senses of memory seem to be present in the image of its congregating pears "In moonlit bushels" as if for a still life (moonlight evoking once again imagination's transformative power) and then of its intruding upon or disrupting imagination with "a hidden cough." Indicative of the way that poems in *White Buildings* cross-reference and play off each other, the image of the "moonlit bushels" and of memory's wakening "alleys with a hidden cough" resonates back to the ending of "Chaplinesque," where, Crane says, "we have seen / The moon in alleys make / A grail of laughter of an empty ash can" (9).

If the opening lines of stanza 2 represent the speaker's determination to live in the moment ("Sulking, sanctioning the sun") and rebel against being dominated by past memories, then that determination continues in stanza 3 as the speaker identifies himself with the momentary, with the constant mutability of the natural world: "Dangerously the summer burned / (I had joined the entrainments of the wind). / The shadows of boulders lengthened my back: / In the bronze gongs of my cheeks / The rain dried without odour" (16). The wind here is a figure both of poetic inspiration and of the ceaseless erosion of time, and what this dual aspect of the image involves becomes clearer as stanza 4's image of "the red and black / Vine-stanchioned valleys" sends us back to the "Perpetual fountains, vines" of the poem immediately preceding "Passage" and to the issues the previous poem raised:

> "It is not long, it is not long;
> See where the red and black
> Vine-stanchioned valleys—"; but the wind
> Died speaking through the ages that you know
> And hug, chimney-sooted heart of man!
> So I was turned about and back, much as your smoke
> Compiles a too well known biography. (16)

Where the speaker said that the summer "dangerously . . . burned" in stanza 3, in stanza 4 he points to the ripening vines as evidence of time's relentless passage; the season does not last long. And his use of the word

stanchioned (i.e., holding up something with a stay or a prop) evokes the "charred and riven stakes" that prop up the vines at the end of "Lachrymae Christi," but it also resonates in the description of the grapevines as "Unstanched and luminous" a few lines before, *stanchion* and *stanch* both involving the notion of a stay or a stop, the former to keep something from falling and the latter to stop the flow of a liquid such as blood. The notion of the grapes as drops of the wine-god's blood and of the stakes that prop up the vines being charred when the vines are burned back accounts for one of the possible significances of the colors "red and black" applied to the "Vine-stanchioned valleys." But the important point about this gesture back toward "Lachrymae Christi" is that it situates the action of "Passage" within the context of the Nietzschean opposition that drives the former poem: Dionysus versus the Crucified, art versus morality, change and death as part of a natural cycle versus death as the punishment for sin.

In order to understand the philosophical source of the Dionysianism Nietzsche elaborates in *The Birth of Tragedy,* we must look for a moment at another work of Nietzsche's from that same period, a work he left unfinished and that was never published in his lifetime, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.* Among the pre-Socratic philosophers Nietzsche deals with in this work, Heraclitus, the philosopher who said that all things are in motion and never at rest and that the unifying principle underlying all appearances is fire, was clearly Nietzsche's favorite. What the world-will was for Schopenhauer (i.e., the principle driving change and the arrow of time), fire was for Heraclitus, according to Nietzsche. Nietzsche explains that Heraclitus understood the world's ceaseless decay and re-creation as being like a game or play:

> In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing-away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. From time to time it starts the game anew. An instant of satiety—and again it is seized by its need, as the artist is seized by his need to create. (*Philosophy* 62)

Heraclitus's philosophy, Nietzsche claims, emptied change and death of any moral significance; they were as innocent as children's play. And it is a short step from Heraclitus, who said that the unifying principle underlying all things was fire, to Dionysus, the "fire-born" god, whose wisdom revealed the primordial unity underlying all the illusory dream images of the objective world. And it is another short step to see that, according to Nietzsche, Greek tragedy, the dramatic play (*spiel* in German) that artists engage in, raises to the level of self-conscious aesthetic contemplation the primordial truth that change and death result from the innocent, childlike play (*spiel*) of the ever-living fire with itself. What this ultimately claims is that the motive force driving the arrow of time is an artistic force, or as

Nietzsche said in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art" (52).

Considering again the image in "Lachrymae Christi" of "the nights opening" that "Chant pyramids,— / Anoint with innocence" (an image whose Dionysian allusions to fire [pyramid] and dew [anoint] we examined earlier), we can see that one of the principal qualities that Nietzsche associates with the Heraclitean ever-living fire in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and that he transfers to the fire-born Dionysian worldview in *The Birth of Tragedy* is innocence, the notion that "coming-to-be and passing-away" are explained without the "moral additive" of sin and guilt. According to this view the image of the nights' dew anointing the earth "with innocence" would then be the Dionysian pole of an opposition whose Christian pole is the image of the "Immaculate venom" that attempts to "bind the fox's teeth" in the previous stanza of "Lachrymae Christi."

Just as we had detected a dual aspect to the image of memory in stanza 2 of "Passage"—unpleasant recollections of childhood or of more recent excesses, on the one hand, and the muse-like power necessary for poetic creation, on the other—so we can now see that there is also a dual aspect to the speaker's statement "I was promised an improved infancy," a dual aspect that speaks to the importance of the notion of innocence (like that which the play of children and artists exhibits) in "Passage." Earlier, we nominated Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode as a possible high Romantic locus for Crane's promise of "an improved infancy," and we did so precisely to account for Crane's apparently negative attitude in "Passage"'s second stanza toward memory on the grounds that Wordsworth's invoking early childhood memories as a corroboration of personal immortality would have run counter to Crane's sense of the illusory nature of personal survival evoked in "Lachrymae Christi." But as there was another, more positive aspect of memory having to do with poetry, so I would suggest that Nietzsche's sense of Dionysian innocence constituted for Crane another, more positive promise of an improved infancy, which is to say, the promise of eternal youthfulness, of the subjective immortality that any poet achieves by having his thoughts (and by implication his name) reborn in the lives of those who come after him, by having his words resound in the mouths of the living to be permanently inscribed in the ceaselessly renewed memory of the human race.

If we are correct in identifying these opposing aspects in "Passage," then we can appreciate that the poem's speaker, caught between the two (Dionysus and the Crucified, art and morality, memory as poetically enabling and memory as accusatory, the Nietzschean worldview of his adulthood and the Christian worldview of his childhood), might well see himself as "tossed on these horns" of a dilemma, "turning on smoked forking spires," as he says in "Possessions." With this in mind we can better understand what the speaker says immediately after introducing into "Passage" the image of "the red and black / Vine-stanchioned valleys" that alludes to

"Lachrymae Christi" and its connotations of Dionysian wisdom: "but the wind / Died speaking through the ages that you know / And hug, chimney-sooted heart of man! / So was I turned around and back, much as your smoke, / Compiles a too well known biography" (16).

The image of fire and burning enters the poem at the very beginning of the third stanza ("Dangerously the summer burned"), with the image underlined by one of the possible causes of the blackness in "the red and black / Vine-stanchioned valleys"—"the charred and riven stakes" left after the burning back of the vines. It is this implicit image of burning that accounts for "the chimney-sooted heart of man" and the "smoke" blown by the wind. But in "Passage," as elsewhere in Crane's poetry, fire and burning are usually images of passion and the self-consuming effects of passionate excess, as in the moth and flame imagery from "Legend." Crane was, of course, familiar with the association of fire and passionate artistic creativity, ranging from images like that in the opening of Shakespeare's *Henry V* ("O for a Muse of fire that would ascend / The brightest heaven of invention") to Nietzsche's linking of the "fire-born" Dionysus to the notion that existence and the world are only justified as an aesthetic phenomenon, to Pater's use of fire imagery in his famous conclusion to *The Renaissance* (his own version of existence's aesthetic justification) with its epigraph from Plato invoking Heraclitus ("Heraclitus says, 'All things are in motion, nothing at rest'" [*Cratylus* 402a]), and its sense that "This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways" (187), and on to its exhortation to make art and its appreciation life's main pursuit: "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (*Renaissance* 189). One can see the link between Pater's sense of Heraclitus and Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus's philosophy: of constant change as simply the game the Heraclitean ever-living fire plays with itself, creating and destroying in forever equal innocence. But in the conclusion to *The Renaissance,* Pater also links the awful brevity of existence, its flame-like quality, to the need for passion in every aspect of life:

> . . . we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world," in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire for beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. (*Renaissance* 190)

In "Passage" Crane evokes not just the passage from one stage of his career to another but also the relentless passage of time, his sense that his poetic maturity, the prime of his talent (evoked as a summer that burns danger-

ously), may not last that long, precisely because the excesses that fuel or, at the very least, are concomitant with, this passionate creativity will soon burn him out. In stanza 4 the speaker faces the possibility that the wind (a figure of poetic inspiration as the force that fans the flame of poetic creativity) has died and that when the flame of this passion ceases "speaking through the ages" the heart of man is left with only the sooty residue of its burning. The stanza's next two lines are the poem's turning point: "So I was turned around and back, much as your smoke / Compiles a too well known biography."

To be "turned around and back" has at least two separate but related meanings. On the one hand, it evokes in a veiled manner Crane's homosexual orientation as being, in the language of his day, an "inversion," and on the other, it refers to Crane's turning back upon his own painful memories of past suffering and excesses to make them the subject of poems such as "Legend," "Possessions," "Lachrymae Christi," "The Wine Menagerie," and "Recitative." It is as if the wind of poetic inspiration had changed direction during the prime of his career, as if the positive aspect of memory associated with the muse of poetry had set out to redeem memory's negative aspect, those recollections that, like the residual smoke of passion's flame, haunted him with the facts of his "too well known biography"—those childhood memories of his parents' marital strife, of his father's incomprehension, and his mother's manipulation of Hart's affections, and the more recent memories of conduct engendered in part by his unhappy childhood. And the notion of Dionysian innocence is crucial to this process of poetic redemption. Under the Christian dispensation drunkenness and homosexuality are sins deserving punishment, but under the Dionysian one (as propounded by Nietzsche, where "*Excess*" reveals "itself as truth") the only justification of existence is aesthetic, not moral, and thus Crane's effort to represent his intoxication and homosexual promiscuity as arising from the same flame of passion that fuels his poetry—to figure them as part of an aesthetic activity as innocent as the play of children or of the ever-living fire with itself—in effect casts over his behavior the justifying mantle of Dionysian innocence. What the best poems in *White Buildings* set out to achieve is just this aesthetic redemption, achieve it through a reflexive movement that makes this process itself the subject matter of the poems.

But an awareness of Crane's "too well known biography" was not just an issue (considered as the haunting, negative effect of memory) for Crane alone but also for his friends and admirers who, knowing of his behavior, felt that he was wasting his time and his talent, expending his spirit in a waste of shame. In that regard, the fifth and sixth stanzas of "Passage" address the subjects of time's relentless passing and Crane's ambitions for undying fame:

> The evening was a spear in the ravine
> That throve through very oak. And had I walked
> The dozen particular decimals of time?

Touching an opening laurel, I found
A thief beneath, my stolen book in hand.

"Why are you back here—smiling an iron coffin?"
"To argue with the laurel," I replied:
"Am justified in transience, fleeing
Under the constant wonder of your eyes—" (16)

The ravine, presumably the same one in which the speaker said he'd left his memory in stanza 2 (though apparently unsuccessfully), contains the evening's "spear," whose progress (one of the meanings of *thrive*) not even the strongest oak can resist, the spear being evening's shadow advancing across the trees. The line immediately following, about walking "The dozen particular decimals of time," is the speaker's questioning how much of his allotted life he has already used up and how much is left. But at this point the speaker comes to another tree, not the mighty oak unable to resist the movement of time, but the laurel, the tree sacred to Apollo, whose leafy boughs are plaited to form the wreath that, since the days of Petrarch, crowns a supreme poet, a poet laureate, the evergreen laurel signifying an undying fame outlasting the movement of time.

It is specifically "an *opening* laurel" (italics mine) the speaker encounters because, of course, "Passage" was first published in the same year that Crane's first volume appeared, marking the beginning of his bid for poetic laurels (though at the time the poem was written in 1925, the manuscript of the book had recently been turned down for publication and not yet found a publisher, so that Crane may well have felt that his reputation in the literary world for erratic behavior had worked against the manuscript's acceptance). What the speaker finds at the laurel is "a thief beneath, my stolen book in hand." One is tempted to read this thief as a personification of time, given the image in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" of "O brother-thief of time" (23), certainly a possible component of the image. But I would suggest that there is something more going on in "Passage." Just as we distinguished between the negative and positive aspects of memory earlier in the poem, so we are seeing at work here another instance of splitting and doubling, that operation by which an ambivalent entity is split in two to produce mutually constitutive doubles—in this case, one (associated with the negative aspect of memory) who squanders time in bouts of drunkenness and homosexual promiscuity and the other (associated with its positive aspect) who makes poetry out of the former's escapades and his own efforts to use time well. And I would argue that the "thief" whom the speaker finds beneath the laurel, holding his book in hand, is indeed his (br)other, the passionate spendthrift aspect of the poet's self. Earlier in discussing "Legend," we interpreted Crane's invocation of mirror imagery as a reference to this structure of splitting and doubling and, as we shall see when we come to "Recitative," it forms the backbone of that poem.

Since Crane evokes these two aspects of the speaker's self as mutually constitutive, as opposing principles that feed on and fuel each other, the

poem's sixth stanza, a dialogue between the speaker and the thief, involves the sort of reversal into the opposite that one associates with such a structure, as each speaks from the place of the other. The thief begins, "Why are you back here—smiling an iron coffin?" Crane knew that the conduct of his emotionally spendthrift other half could ultimately be self-destructive, and it is the thief, the time- and energy-wasting double, who projects onto the poet-speaker the image of approaching death. Conversely, with the speaker's response ("To argue with the laurel," I replied: / "Am justified in transience, fleeing / Under the constant wonder of your eyes—"), Crane attributes to the artist (the one seeking the undying evergreen of poetic laurels) a justification through "transience," the fleeing away of time, while he attributes to the thief (the waster of time) the constancy of wonder, each speaking from the place of the other.

Which brings us to the poem's final stanza, one that rivals in difficulty the fifth stanza of "Lachrymae Christi": "He closed the book. And from the Ptolemies / Sand troughed us in a glittering abyss. / A serpent swam a vertex to the sun / —On unpaced beaches leaned its tongue and drummed. / What fountains did I hear? what icy speeches? / Memory, committed to the page, had broke" (16). The reference to the "Ptolemies" recalls the Egyptian imagery of pyramids and sphinxes from the earlier poem, but here the image is meant to evoke a larger span of time (one stretching back to an ancient civilization whose language had been lost until the hieroglyphics were deciphered in the early nineteenth century) against which the notion of a book's "undying" fame could be measured, a span of time so great that it could swallow up not only the fame of any book but even the knowledge of the language in which it was written, burying them beneath the sands of time or troughing them in the "glittering abyss" of sand falling through the neck of an hourglass.

The image of the serpent swimming a "vertex to the sun" probably reflects Crane's knowledge of ancient Egyptian lore (the sort of thing he'd have found in the eleventh edition of the *Britannica*) in which the sun god Re's enemy was Apophis, the great serpent personifying darkness or nonbeing, the enemy that the sun god had to defeat on his nocturnal voyage through the underworld in order to emerge at dawn. The root of the word *vertex* is the Latin *vertex, vortex* meaning "whirl, whirlpool, top of the head, summit" from the Latin *vertere,* "to turn," and thus this vertex (given its standard meaning as "the highest point, the point farthest from the base of a figure") to which the serpent swims, in what would apparently be a turning or coiling motion, is the point opposite the vortex of the "glittering abyss" in the preceding line. If the sand that "troughs us in a glittering abyss" represents the ancient past, then the serpent that swims a vertex to the sun, evoking the daily victory of light over darkness, represents the time yet to come, as figured again by the sand, this time lying on "unpaced beaches" where mankind has yet to set foot. And the serpent's leaning its tongue and drumming on these unpaced beaches evokes the resistless, rhythmic beat of the march of time. That the serpent in "Passage" represents time to come receives further confirmation from the image

in "The Wine Menagerie" of the serpent "whose skin, facsimile of time, unskeins" (17) (evoking snakes' annual shedding of their skin) and from the image in "The River" of Pocahontas as the physical body of the continent with "Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark" (43).

In his biography of Crane, Unterecker reads the image of the serpent swimming a vertex to the sun as a reference to the constellation Serpens, which "is midway between the pole and the equator and midway between the points where the sun appears on the first day of spring and fall" (406)—a reading that in effect sees the image as an evocation of seasonal recurrence played out among the eternal stars and thus of endless future time. Just as the balancing of opposites had provided much of the poem's structure, so in its penultimate line this balancing continues with Crane asking, "What fountains did I hear? what icy speeches?" He refers here not so much to his personal history as to that written double of himself constituted by the poems in *White Buildings*, for clearly the fountains he heard are those in "Lachrymae Christi"—the "Perpetual fountains, vines" channeling back dead matter to the world of daylight through the action of worms—and the icy speeches those at the end of "North Labrador"—"there is only the shifting of moments / That journey toward no Spring— / No birth, no death, no time nor sun / In answer" (11): which is to say, a fountain's flowing water as a figure of recurrence on the one hand, and water turned to ice as a figure of stasis on the other. With this evocation of the poles between which Crane's poetic achievement has voyaged in *White Buildings,* the final line calls up the poetic memory's effort to face down and free the speaker from those negative aspects of memory that had led him to try to leave it in a ravine: "Memory, committed to the page, had broke" (16).

§ 7
"The Wine Menagerie," "Recitative"

The nineteenth poem in *White Buildings,* "The Wine Menagerie," written between late 1925 and early 1926 and first published in May 1926, begins with imagery of Dionysian intoxication redeeming ordinary vision by turning it into visionary insight: "Invariably when wine redeems the sight, / Narrowing the mustard scansions of the eyes, / A leopard ranging in the brow / Asserts a vision in the slumbering gaze" (16). The image of a wine-induced narrowing of the eyes suggests that the visionary arises from looking not outside but inside, a sense stemming perhaps from one possible etymology of the word *mystic* that derives it from the Greek *mystos,* meaning to keep silent or to close the eye. The notion that ordinary vision interferes with the visionary, that its distractions must be reduced in order to foster spiritual insight, is the sort of thing Crane had in mind when he cited in "General Aims and Theories" Blake's lines "We are led to believe in a lie / When we see *with* not *through* the eye" (162). In any case the "vision in the slumbering gaze" arises from within, when wine awakens the "leopard ranging in the brow"—leopards, and the variety of leopards called

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panthers, being animals associated with Dionysus. In *The Birth of Tragedy,* as we saw, Nietzsche describes Dionysus's chariot as being pulled by panthers, a connection of the god with the animal attested in representations of Dionysus in Greek art, as well as in ancient Greek folklore where leopards and panthers were supposed to be attracted by the smell of wine.

In the second stanza, the poem's physical setting in a saloon (if the time of the poem is pre-1920 and the Volstead Act) or a speakeasy (if after) gradually comes into focus as the "glozening decanters" behind the bar "reflect the street" as well as the speaker, whom the decanters "wear in crescents on their bellies." That the decanters are described as "glozening," (flattering or lying) suggests that their reflection of the street makes it seem better or brighter than it is and implies that the decanters' intoxicating contents have a similar effect on the speaker. Whether there is dancing going on or some sort of show, there is "Slow applause" that "flows into liquid cynosures," the last word evoking the liquids in the decanters as something brilliant that attracts the eye. If we take the word *applause* here as meaning simply approval, then the decanters' contents could be seem as creating in the speaker that slightly intoxicated sense of approving of all things (including the liquids that create this sense), a notion supported by the word *glow* to denote "high" when the speaker says, "I am conscripted to their shadows' glow." Since the liquids in the decanters are alcoholic, Crane may have been savoring the connotation created by the Greek root of *cynosure,* which literally means "a dog's tail," the word's origin recalling the old phrase about recovering from a hangover by having a drink, taking "the hair of the dog that bit me." But if we take the mention of applause literally and connect it with the description in the next stanza of a man and woman whom the speaker's been observing, the image of "their shadows' glow" may refer to a couple who've been dancing, just as in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" the dancing couples in the roof garden are described as "White shadows" that "slip across the floor" (21). And if this is a connotation of "shadows' glow," then another meaning emerges from the line: that the flowing movements of their intoxicated dance have attracted the speaker's eye, in effect "conscripting" him, writing him into their drama.

In the third stanza, Crane evokes the barroom's seedy interior with its "imitation onyx wainscoting" of painted wood resembling the different colored layers of quartz in real onyx, each color suggested by that of a different substance ("Painted emulsion of snow, eggs, yarn, coal, manure") and each substance adding an increasing drabness to the room's atmosphere. And it is "Against the imitation onyx wainscoting" that the interaction of the man and woman is observed: "Regard the forceps of the smile that takes her. / Percussive sweat is spreading to his hair. Mallets, / Her eyes, unmake an instant of the world . . . " Clearly part of the meaning of "The Wine Menagerie"'s title is the animality or animal spirits released by intoxication, and the physicality of desire portrayed in these lines acquires with the image "the forceps of the smile that takes her" an almost mechanical feeling, indicative of Crane's sense of modern love. Further, the man's "Percussive sweat" and the "Mallets" of the woman's eyes again suggest that they are, or have

been, dancing—with the imagery of drumming (evoked by the mention of mallets, i.e., drumsticks with a padded head, most often used for playing a tom-tom or a xylophone) being transferred from the making of dance music to the dancers' persons. The same sort of transfer occurs in the roof garden dance setting of "Faustus and Helen," where images such as the "snarling hails of melody" and "the deft catastrophes of drums" become the sound effects for the tipsy dancers' movements as "Rhythmic ellipses lead into canters" (21). Note as well that "the smile that takes her" from "Wine Menagerie" resonates in a variant of this image at the end of the roof garden scene in "Marriage": "Let us take her on the incandescent wax / Striated with nuances, nervosities / That we are heir to" (22). Instead of the drumming being translated to the dancers' bodies as in "Wine Menagerie," here the young woman's body almost merges with the waxed dance floor made "incandescent" by hot music, perhaps in a variant of the moth-and-candle-flame image from "Legend." Of course, a man and woman embracing in a dance often suggests the more intimate embrace of intercourse, and thus the man's "percussive sweat" and the woman's gaze that "unmakes an instant of the world" can be read as connoting the moment of sexual climax that would be the goal of physical desire. In this regard recall that in the "National Winter Garden" section of *The Bridge* the music for the striptease dancer is described as "A tom-tom scrimmage with a somewhere violin" and that the climax of her dance is evoked as orgasmic: "All but her belly buried in the floor; / And the lewd trounce of a final muted beat! / We flee her spasm through a fleshless door" (62).

"The Wine Menagerie"'s stanza 4, another difficult group of lines, initiates an apparent movement away from the previous setting to more general imagery of time and death: "What is it in this heap the serpent pries— / Whose skin, facsimile of time, unskeins / Octagon, sapphire transepts round the eyes." One of the meanings of the serpent here is time, and also as the form that Satan assumed in tempting Eve, the serpent that first brought death into the world. The "heap" into which the serpent pries is the speakeasy and its denizens and, more particularly, the embracing bodies of the man and woman in the preceding stanza, in which case the serpent, as a phallic symbol, would suggest insemination and a birth into time and death. (Predictably, a child appears in the next stanza.) Of course, one of the connotations of the serpent image may also be the snakes that people who suffer from alcoholic delirium tremens believe they see.

If the serpent shedding its skin is a measure of time's passage, then the stanza's concluding carillon image that "assures / Speed to the arrow into feathered skies" may be another. A carillon, a set of fixed chimes or bells struck by hammers or mallets and controlled by a keyboard, is often associated with clock towers or church steeples, and its sounding is often used to mark certain hours of the day. The "whispered" carillon's almost unnoticed marking of time's ceaseless movement is said to assure "speed to the arrow"—an image that probably alludes to Zeno's paradox of the flying arrow and that must be read against the line in stanza 3 that the woman's eyes "unmake an instant of the world." Crane uses the imagery of marriage or

mating in "Faustus and Helen" and in "The Dance" section of *The Bridge* to personify a conjunction of opposites. But where both of these are idealized unions, the desire between the man and woman in "The Wine Menagerie" is more physical and the surroundings more sordid than those associated with a sacred marriage. Yet the woman's eyes seem nevertheless to hold a promise of a climactic union that would for a moment stop time, in effect, "unmake an instant of the world."

Recall that Zeno's paradox of the flying arrow is meant to demonstrate the logically contradictory, not to say illusory, nature of motion. The paradox "treats time and space alike as composed of indivisible minima" (i.e., of moments) and argues that the arrow, at every instant and at every point in its flight, "occupies a space equal to its own dimensions" which is the definition of an object at rest, and thus that "an arrow in flight is at rest" (Kirk and Raven 294–95). Aristotle in the *Physics* says that Zeno's argument for the flying arrow's being at rest "follows from the assumption that time is composed of moments: if this assumption is not granted, the conclusion will not follow" (Kirk and Raven 294). It is the continuous movement of time that grounds the continuous motion of an object like the flying arrow through space, time (evoked by the carillon's chimes sounding the hour) thus "assures / Speed to the arrow," and since this undercuts the idea of time being composed of moments, it provides a counterimage to that of the woman's eyes that "unmake an *instant* of the world," a counterimage to the romantic notion that physical union or sexual climax can be a moment "out of space, out of time" and thus suggesting the parodic sense of Crane's evocation of heterosexual pairing in stanza 3 in comparison with his other uses of the idealized imagery of the sacred marriage as a conjunction of opposites. But if we are correct in reading Crane's arrow image as an allusion to Zeno's paradox, then from what spot was this Zenonian arrow fired? Probably it came from stanza 21 of Paul Valéry's influential poem "Le Cimetière marin" (1920): "Zénon! Cruel Zénon! Zénon d'Élée! / M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée / Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas! / Le son m'enfante et la flèche me tue! / Ah! le soleil . . . Quelle ombre de tortue / Pour l'âme, Achille immobile à grands pas!" (Flores 436). The speaker in Valéry's poem says that he has been pierced by Zeno's winged arrow, which "flies and doesn't fly" ("vole, et . . . ne vole pas"), and that the sound of the arrow's vibration brings him to birth ("Le son m'enfante") and the arrow kills him—the movement of the speaker back to his birth evoking the sort of temporal regression characteristic of Zeno's paradoxes of infinite regression, like that of Achilles and the tortoise evoked in the stanza's last two lines. Clearly, Valéry's speaker being pierced by Zeno's arrow would have resonated for Crane in the concluding image of "The Dance"'s sacred marriage where Maquokeeta is shot full of arrows.

In stanza 5 of "The Wine Menagerie," "An urchin," sent by his parents to fetch a pail of beer, enters from the snow outside and "Nudges a canister across the bar / While August meadows somewhere clasp his brow." This summer imagery of youth introduced into the dead of winter evokes the contrast between a supposed childlike innocence represented by the urchin

and the sordidness of the saloon's denizens depicted in the next stanza: "Each chamber . . . coins some squint, / Remorseless line, minting their separate wills— / Poor streaked bodies wreathing up and out / Unwitting the stigma that each turn repeals: / Between black tusks the roses shine!" If the "Poor streaked bodies" are those of lower-class women who are slyly looked over (squinted at) and propositioned by men in the saloon (that is, given a "Remorseless line, minting their separate wills"), then the social "stigma" associated with this activity would be "unwitting" (in the sense of being unfelt and thus ignored) and finally repealed (in effect, cancelled out) by repetition of "each turn." But if the denizens of the saloon are in some sense evoked as lost souls, the imagery of the stanza's last line holds out a promise of possible redemption. "Between blacks tusks the roses shine" is, I would argue, an allusion to Faust's ultimate salvation in Goethe's play.

Recall that when Faust dies and is about to be buried (Goethe, Part 2, Act 5), Mephistopheles comes to claim his soul, conjuring up devils ("Lords of the straight, lords of the crooked horn") to bear Faust to Hell. At this point the stage directions read, "The horrible maw of Hell opens up on the left," the mouth of Hell being compared by Goethe to the muzzle of a hyena. As the maw opens, he says, "Tusks yawn." But suddenly a chorus of angels appears stage right and begins strewing roses. The roses ("Blossoms ethereal, / Flamelets empyreal") catch fire from the devils' breath and begin to scorch the devils. Meanwhile, Mephistopheles starts "fighting the hovering roses" but "Like pitch and sulphur they cling to" his "neck" (Goethe 333–35), and the chorus of angels bear away Faust's soul. The allusion to Faust reinforces the notion that the lurid, not to say sordid, pairing of male and female in the saloon is meant to contrast the physical reality of heterosexual love with the idealized union, the *hieros gamos,* of modern science and classical beauty that Crane presents two poems later in *White Buildings* with "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." But this Faustian allusion is also meant to remind us of the "Witch's Kitchen" episode in Goethe's play, where Faust is given a drugged drink by the witch, a love potion that makes him, in Mephistopheles's words, see "a Helena in every girl" he meets (Goethe 76). Under the influence of this drink, he is smitten by the young virgin Margaret, or Gretchen, whom he meets in the street. He seduces Margaret, makes her pregnant, and then abandons her. She has their child but drowns the baby to hide her shame. Margaret is sentenced to death on the block, but Faust tries to rescue her from prison at the end of Part 1 of *Faust.* However, when Margaret sees that Faust is accompanied by Mephistopheles, she refuses to go with him, preferring to suffer her punishment by the headsman's axe and throwing herself on the mercy of her divine Father. At which point Mephistopheles says, "She is judged!" and a voice from above replies, "She is saved!" (136). It is precisely because Margaret is saved, forgives Faust, and still loves him that, when Faust's soul is snatched by the rose-strewing angels from the tusks of the maw of Hell, Margaret reappears and conducts Faust's soul to the final beatific vision as the chorus intones, "All past the humanly / Wrought here in love; / The Eternal-Womanly / Draws us above" (346).

With "The Wine Menagerie"'s seventh stanza, the poem makes a change of direction from the speaker's observations of the barroom and its patrons to the effects of wine on the speaker's own consciousness: the breaking down of the individual's sense of isolation as Dionysian intoxication creates a sense of universal brotherhood with those he observes in the bar, a sympathy that creates "New thresholds, new anatomies!" in which "Wine talons" like those of a soaring eagle "Build freedom up about me and distill / This competence—to travel in a tear / Sparkling alone, within another's will" (17). This tear, symbolizing the poet's creative empathy, allows him to participate in another's inner life, but it would seem to have this drawback: that the tear, inasmuch as it is described as "Sparkling alone," does not seem to create a reciprocal movement by which others are able to share in the speaker's life. Of course, the tear also evokes half of that Nietzschean image from *The Birth of Tragedy* of Dionysus's smiles and tears as generative of gods and men. Predictably, as if in response to this lack of reciprocity, the other half of the smiles/tears image appears in the opening lines of the poem's next stanza as the speaker seeks that empathy from another: "Until my blood dreams a receptive smile / Wherein new purities are snared" (17).

But if the poem makes a change of direction in stanza 7 from the speaker's observing the inhabitants of the barroom to his commenting on his own situation, this change also seems to involve a movement from observing the heterosexuality of the others to contemplating the speaker's own homosexuality. One gains this sense from the abrupt turn the imagery takes in the next lines: after the speaker's dream of "a receptive smile," suddenly there comes "where chimes / Before some flame of gaunt repose a shell / Tolled once, perhaps, by every tongue in hell" (17). This sudden shift from an image of love to one of suffering and the flames of hell (in this case, a memorial flame commemorating a lost love and the pain of that loss) had characterized Crane's earlier evocations of his own sexuality in such poems as "Legend" and "Possessions," evocations of *his* kind of love and of his reaction to the misery and/or humiliation it caused. Moreover, this sudden shift would also seem to evoke Crane's sense of how regularly the speaker's hoped-for reciprocity of feeling in another, the dreamed-of "receptive smile," had been betrayed by the sort of person the poet actually picked up in bars. Finally, one cannot rule out a sexual implication to the images of "shell" and "tongue," though we should note that *shell* (where one would expect the word *bell* given the verb *tolled*) is probably also being used, as we noted earlier, in the archaic sense of a "lyre," its Orphic resonance recalling the poet who journeyed to hell and returned.

With the last line of the eighth stanza and the first of the ninth, the speaker directly addresses himself as poet: "—Anguished, the wit that cries out of me: // 'Alas,—these frozen billows of your skill!'"—these last apparently being his poems, works in which he has tried to deal with (and in so doing, seek creative compensation for) his sexuality and its disappointments. The speaker then commands himself "Invent new dominoes of

love and bile . . . "—"dominoes" perhaps referring to the game played with black and white tiles but more probably to the long hooded cloaks usually worn with a mask at masquerades, so that the line's injunction to the poet is to create new cloaked or veiled versions of the love that dare not speak its name and its angry or melancholy aftermath. But at this point reality intervenes: "Ruddy, the tooth implicit of the world / Has followed you" —the reality of Tennyson's nature "red in tooth and claw," breaking through the masks of the poems. Though the poems may be masks or evasions, yet the speaker consoles himself that "Though in the end you know / And count some dim inheritance of sand, / How much yet meets the treason of the snow." If the "dim inheritance of sand" evokes the passage of time as sand running through an hourglass and if its "inheritance" is what the speaker has achieved poetically in his brief span, then the snow, as a white cloaking of the ruddy tooth of reality, is equally domino-like. It is a masking of the world's brutal reality, and the snow's treason is its darkening and melting away with time like the sand running through the glass.

The tenth stanza continues the speaker's address to himself and evokes his difference from the heterosexual couple in the poem's first half, with its attendant anxiety: "Rise from the dates and crumbs. And walk away / Stepping over Holofernes' shins— / Beyond the wall, whose severed head floats by / With Baptist John's. Their whispering begins. // —And fold your exile on your back again; / Petrushka's valentine pivots on its pin" (18). The speaker characterizes his decision to "walk away" and leave the barroom by referring to two figures—Holofernes and John the Baptist—decapitated through the direct or indirect actions of a woman. One wonders if the speaker's invoking these figures points to a castration anxiety regarding females that reflected Crane's psychologically paralyzing relationship with his mother. This imagery emphasizes the poem's focus on the speaker's same-sex orientation in its second half as contrasted with the heterosexual couples observed in the first, since one assumes that these couples are the ones whose "whispering begins" as the speaker leaves the saloon, perhaps in company with a male companion or after the failure of such an advance on his part. When the speaker tells himself in the penultimate line "fold your exile on your back again," the exile refers in part to his sense of the difference his sexual orientation imposes. But if the biblical figures of Holofernes and John the Baptist seem too grandiose a comparison for the speaker sitting in a saloon, Crane immediately reduces the speaker's image to that of a Chaplinesque clown figure—the Russian Punch-like puppet Petrushka. Crane knew Petrushka's story from Stravinsky's 1911 ballet, its title role written for and danced by Nijinsky in a production mounted by Diaghilev. The ballet opens at a street fair in nineteenth-century St. Petersburg where a showman exhibits in his booth three puppets: a ballerina, a Moor, and Petrushka. The three puppets come to life and dance. Petrushka is smitten with the ballerina, and after the performance he tries to win her affection with his tricks and antics, but she ignores him, preferring instead the Moor. Petrushka walks in on the Moor and the ballerina and tries to

separate them, offering to fight the Moor. But the Moor kicks him out and sets the ballerina on his lap. Later in the show booth, Petrushka is chased by the Moor wielding a scimitar, is struck down, and hacked to pieces. The crowd at the booth leaves, and the ghost of Petrushka appears above the booth, the puppet now immortal as the snow falls.

What Petrushka shares with the figures of Holofernes and John the Baptist is the motif of dismemberment, and since Holofernes is drunk with wine when Judith decapitates him and since the implication of Herod's rash promise to grant Salome's request is that it was a promise made when he was in his cups, the motif of intoxication is also present in two of the three figures Crane invokes. All of which is to say that though a castration anxiety may be at work here, the combined motifs of intoxication and dismemberment also mark Holofernes and John the Baptist as figures that are being assimilated to the suffering Dionysus, the god of intoxication who was torn apart by the Titans, assimilated as part of the ongoing defense mechanism that in *White Buildings* structures Crane's best poems, those in which his own alcoholic and sexual excesses (along with the masochistic impulse that fuels them) are refigured as the divine excesses of creativity. But Crane is too good a poet to let himself be carried away by his own figurations, and so, as he says in "Chaplinesque," he must make his "meek adjustments," adding, in a touch of deflating modernist irony, the image of the puppet Petrushka who seems to wear the "valentine" of his heart attached to his costume with a pin, or whose heart has been pierced by a pin. (One thinks of the line from Eliot's "Prufrock" in which the speaker registers his discomfort under the eyes of the women assembled in the room for his visit: "The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, / And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, / Then how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?" [Eliot, *Complete,* 5].) But of course the image of "Petrushka's valentine" that "pivots on its pin" also evokes the Stravinsky ballet character pivoting on one leg (pin)—his exile transformed into art with the ballet movement of pirouetting on one leg performed by the Pierrot-like clown.

Though "Recitative," the twentieth poem in *White Buildings,* written between October 1923 and March 1924 and first published in the spring of 1924, begins with a reference to Janus (the Roman, or perhaps Etruscan, god of beginnings and endings, of entries and exits and thus of thresholds, the god who gave his name to the month of January), the poem subtly and quickly assimilates Janus to the figure of Dionysus:

> Regard the capture here, O Janus-faced,
> As double as the hands that twist this glass.
> Such eyes at search or rest you cannot see;
> Reciting pain or glee, how can you bear!
>
> Twin shadowed halves, the breaking second holds
> In each the skin alone, and so it is
> I crust a plate of vibrant mercury
> Born cleft to you, and brother in the half. (18)

Crane uses the scenario of a speaker contemplating his face in a mirror to evoke the psychological structure of splitting and doubling, and he also suggests that this relation between the speaker and his mirror image is mutually constitutive, that it is "like the hands that twist this glass," which is to say, like the relationship between left and right, each only having meaning, only signifying, in relation to (as half of an opposition with) the other. The glass mentioned in the second line is certainly a looking glass, "a plate of vibrant mercury," but also perhaps with connotations of a drinking glass filled with an intoxicating liquor. (Recall in "The Wine Menagerie" the mirror-like quality of the "glozening decanters that reflect the street" wearing the speaker "in crescents on their bellies.") The halving and twinning relationship between "Recitative"'s speaker and his mirror image is emphasized in phrases such as "Twin shadowed halves" and "brothers in the half," and the origin of this mutual splitting, says the speaker to his double, is the fact that he was "Borne cleft to you"—an image recalling that previous one in "Legend" of "This cleaving and this burning," the mirror image (narcissistic) object choice of homosexuality evoked as "Twice and twice / (Again the smoking souvenir, / Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again / Until the bright logic is won / Unwhispering as a mirror / Is believed" (3). Since the usual representation of Janus is that of two identical profiles facing away from each other on one neck, the speaker's face-to-face encounter with his mirror image reverses that directionality, but the image of the speaker's "hands that twist this glass" suggests that he is looking in one of those mirrors that has a handle and a reflecting surface on each side, so that when he turns the mirror around the same image appears, like the face of an emperor stamped on the obverse and reverse of a single coin, a figuration that, as we shall see, he reprises in stanza 4's image of a spinning disk.

The deeper sense of the speaker's addressing his mirror image as "O Janus-faced" depends on our knowing that the double face of the Roman god Janus recalled a common representation of Dionysus in ancient Greece. The god was frequently represented in the Archaic period by a pillar with a long garment hung from it and bearing at its top a double mask of the god with the faces pointing in opposite directions, the double mask signifying that Dionysus, the twice born, the ruler over the realm of the dead and of rebirth in spring, was "in both his aspects . . . ruler over the whole year. *One* mask was never the *whole god,* for only in half his being was Dionysos the 'mask god' or the bearded Dionysos in the long garment who developed from this idol" (Kerényi 283). These pillars bearing the double mask of Dionysus are liberally attested to in representations on ancient Greek pottery (Kerényi, figs. 82 and 83), and the god's double mask, representing his dual aspect of death and rebirth, probably accounts for the two masks that represent tragedy and comedy, one frowning, the other smiling. Noting that Dionysian rites were the origin not only of tragedy but of comedy as well, Carl Kerényi explains in *Dionysos*:

> The word "tragedy" is a lasting reminder of a strict and somber Dionysian rite. *Tragodia* meant "song on the occasion of the he-goat," the sacrificial animal

> condemned to death both as the god's representative and as his enemy. The word "comedy" embodies a similar memory. It points to *komos. Komodia* is a "song on the occasion of a *komos*." Since time immemorial, *komos* or *komazein* had referred to the swarming bands of men who went about honoring the wine god with dancing and singing, but following no strict, let alone somber, rite. In these non-dramatic rejoicings, Dionysos was no less present than in the dithyramb, though in a different way; not in dithyrambic tension, but free and unrestrained, a true diastole.
>
> This diastole requires special attention, for it is a specific Dionysian state rooted in the myth of the god as it affected men. It is a male intoxication. This intoxication there is good reason to distinguish from mere drunkenness, for in this state men executed intricate dances with a light step and spoke difficult lines full of ingenious wit. The salient characteristic of this intoxication was the falling away of inhibitions, including those of the mind. Laughter swept away the last barriers. The atmosphere of comedy can be said to have originated in the *ecstasy of the komos.* (Kerenyi 333)

If the double mask of Dionysus lies behind the masks of tragedy and comedy, then one can understand the opposition Crane evokes in the first stanza regarding the mirror image whose eyes are said specifically to *recite* "pain or glee." Pain as the anguish of death (tragedy) and glee as the joy of rebirth (comedy) are linked in stanza 3 to what Crane understood from reading Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* as the mutually constitutive opposition of Dionysus's tears from which "sprang man" and his smiles from which "sprang the Olympian gods" (73). Contemplating the doubleness of his Janus-like image, the speaker says, "Inquire this much-exacting fragment smile, / Its drums and darkest blowing leaves ignore,— / Defer though, revocation of the tears / That yield attendance to one crucial sign" (18). Pain and glee, tears and smiles, tragedy and comedy—all these meet in the image of the double mask of Dionysus attached to a pillar from which a long garment hung down, and this image sheds light on the line from "The Wine Menagerie" in which the poet demands of himself, "Invent new dominoes of love and bile," for, as we noted earlier, a "domino" is a long, loose, hooded cloak usually worn with a mask, and the love and bile (melancholy) would align with the oppositions of glee/pain, smiles/tears, comedy/tragedy. As the "new dominoes of love and bile" that the poet exhorts himself to invent are the masks of his poems, so the speaker gazing at the mirror image of himself in "Recitative" figuratively represents the poet contemplating the inscribed image of himself in these poetic masks, a shadow image created by black print on white paper. The "much-exacting . . . smile" is described as a "fragment" because the smile of love, glee, and rebirth (comedy) is only half of this dual mask of the god, its other mutually constitutive half being the tears of melancholy, pain, and death (tragedy), and a fragment also because Dionysus is a god associated with dismemberment. The speaker exhorts himself and us to "inquire" into this smile, but he also warns us to "ignore" the "drums" and intoxicated dancing of those Dionysian followers wearing the "darkest blowing leaves"

of ivy in their hair, the ivy crowns worn in imitation of the wine god's own distinctive ivy crown. For though the smile of love and rebirth represents half of life's truth embodied in the figure of Dionysus, the tears of suffering and death represent the inevitable other half. Consequently, the speaker demands that the former truth not erase or cancel out the latter, demands that we "defer" the "revocation of tears / That yield attendance to one crucial sign" (25). But what is the "one crucial sign" whose attendance causes the "revocation of tears"? The answers lies, as so often in Crane's poems, on the level of etymology. The root of the word *crucial* is the Latin word *crux,* "cross." The sign of the cross recalls Nietzsche's opposition between Dionysus and the Crucified, his contention that the difference between the two is not their martyrdom but the meaning of their suffering, whether a tragic meaning or a Christian one (*Will* 543).

The poem's fourth stanza evokes the structure of psychological splitting and doubling in imagery that suggests two faces stamped on either side of a coin or a disk: "Look steadily—how the wind feasts and spins / The brain's disk shivered against lust. Then watch / While darkness, like an ape's face, falls away, / And gradually white buildings answer day" (18). This oscillation between two aspects of the speaker's self—the bright and the dark halves, the respectable half that loves beauty and creates it in poetry and the shameful half given to the animal excesses of drunkenness and lust (figured as the "ape's face")—is assimilated to the ceaseless alternation of night and day, and the wind that spins the "brain's disk," continually turning it so that no sooner is the disk's bright side facing us than it is replaced by the dark, represents, as in so many of Crane's poems, the afflatus of poetic inspiration, whose very movement creates (but equally is created by) this constant alternation. With the waning of darkness when the "ape's face falls away" and the coming of dawn (that recurring figure in Crane's poetry for the moment of visual/visionary discovery), the "white buildings" of Crane's poems are revealed.

In calling his poem "Recitative," Crane seems to allude to the *recitativo* of opera (those rhythmically free vocal passages that replicate the natural inflections of speech), and the poem's recitative quality suggests a soliloquy, a dramatic monologue addressed by the speaker to himself, meant not so much to be heard by the reader as overheard. This sense of the speaker's thinking out loud, with one aspect of the self scrutinizing another aspect and delivering its demands in the imperatives of stanzas 1, 3, and 4 ("Regard," "Inquire," "Defer," "Look steadily"), continues in stanza 5: "Let the same nameless gulf beleaguer us— / Alike suspend us from atrocious sums / Built floor by floor on shafts of steel that grant / The plummet heart, like Absalom, no stream" (19). To decipher the stanza's imagery, we must start by noting that the "white buildings" of the preceding stanza, which on the figurative level are Crane's poems, are on the literal level the skyscrapers of Manhattan seen at dawn, some of which Crane could have watched being built, either from the window of his Brooklyn apartment or on his commute into Manhattan to work. The imagery of the skyscrapers' construction ("Built floor by floor on shafts of steel") also functions as a figure of

the sort of visionary ascension Crane attempts in building his poems. But the danger of aspiring to those heights is the distance one may fall if one fails. When the speaker addresses himself and his double, "Let the same nameless gulfs beleaguer us— / Alike suspend us from atrocious sums," one has the sense that the speaker's ascent into the visionary sublime—as he builds his soaring poetry like a "skygak" (the word he uses in "Cape Hatteras" [57] for a steeplejack walking on girders)—has suspended him over a gulf, an abyss.

This gulf is nameless in two senses: on the one hand, the gulf represents a content whose sublimity may be beyond words (recall that in "Southern Cross" the speaker is tormented by the image of the "nameless Woman of the South," of whom he says, "It is blood to remember; it is fire / To stammer back . . . It is / God—your namelessness" [61]) and, on the other hand, the nameless gulf represents for the poet the danger of namelessness, the danger that the speaker's poems will fail to bequeath his name to future ages. In "Passage" Crane had associated future time with the image of an abyss, evoking the ceaselessly running sands of time in the line "And from the Ptolemies / Sand troughed us in a glittering abyss" (16), an abyss capable of swallowing the names of not only poets and their poems but also the very languages in which the poets wrote. The reference to Absalom in the stanza's last line reinforces this meaning, evoking one man's effort to keep his name alive by building a stone structure. Absalom, the son of King David, had rebelled against his father, driven David from Jerusalem, and then engaged in a battle with David's followers. In the battle, Absalom's forces are routed, and as Absalom is escaping from the field on a mule, he rides under "the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away" (2 Samuel 18:9). As Absalom hangs suspended between heaven and earth, he is killed by Joab, one of David's followers. Joab then gives directions to bury Absalom in "a great pit in the wood" and cover him with a heap of stones. At this point the writer of the account in 2 Samuel adds a detail crucial to our understanding Crane's allusion: "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place" (2 Samuel 18:18).

The speaker says to his double that in constructing their poems' "white buildings" (like skyscrapers "built floor by floor") they will, like Absalom who hangs between heaven and earth, be suspended in their sublime ascensions over the "nameless gulf," a gulf whose depths the human heart may never be able to measure with a plumb line (a "plummet"), never be able to capture in words, and that consequently the possible failure of those soaring poetic aspirations, a failure that would transform the nameless gulf into the gulf of namelessness for the poet, must be read against Absalom's aspirations in erecting a pillar bearing his name to keep "his name in remembrance" in place of a son. Like Absalom, Crane knew, given his sexual orientation, that he would probably never have a son and that his poems

would have to serve as his Absalom's pillar. And since the notion of erecting a lasting memorial to a dead person relies on the ancient phallic connotations of such an erection (the ability to stand upright, considered as a signifier of life, rather than lying supine), then the sense of Absalom's pillar as a substitute for the son sprung from his loins (that "stream" of progeny that had been denied him) would have meshed in Crane's mind with the Whitmanian notion of the poem-as-phallic-object.

The allusion to Absalom's pillar and what it symbolizes in stanza 5 forms the connecting link between the symbolic "white buildings" of Crane's skyscraping poems in stanza 4 and the image that opens stanza 6: "The highest tower,—let her ribs palisade / Wrenched gold of Nineveh;—yet leave the tower. / The bridge swings over salvage, beyond the wharves; / A wind abides the ensign of your will . . ." (19). Skyscraper, pillar, and tower are all structures capable of bearing a person's name for posterity, like "the nickel-dime tower" (the Woolworth Building) in "Virginia." In associating the tower with the "wrenched gold of Nineveh" (the capital city of the Assyrian Empire that fell in 612 BC and that was only rediscovered and excavated in the nineteenth century), Crane suggests how ancient a structure, considered as a figure of human aspiration, a tower is and how much more valuable is that sense of human ascension (a constant striving upward embodied in this structure) than is the gold of Nineveh that would have been carried off when the city fell. In effect Crane says, "Let the gold go, yet leave the tower." The tower as a figure of human aspiration immediately gives way in that stanza to the bridge as its modern figuration, with the use of the verb *swings* marking the structure as a suspension bridge and its location (implied by "over salvage, beyond the wharfs") pointing to Brooklyn Bridge. Both tower and bridge soar into the air, but the bridge has the further sense in Crane's poetry of communicating between separate entities, of being a phallic, linking third term. That as a suspension bridge it is said to swing (to move in the wind) introduces the wind image in the stanza's last line, though the figurative implication of that "wind" which "abides the ensign of your will" suggests the divine breeze of poetic inspiration. One imagines this line as being addressed by the poetic half of the speaker's self to its less respectable double, so that the image of an ensign (a flag) blowing in the wind (taking its direction from the wind) has been reversed, with the wind (the afflatus) taking its direction from (abiding by) the poet's will. The speaker acknowledges, in effect, that it is the very willfulness expressed in his double's excesses that creates and directs the wind of creativity, and having made that admission, he is ready for the compact he proposes in the poem's final stanza: "In alternating bells have you not heard / All hours clapped dense into a single stride? / Forgive me for an echo of these things, / And let us walk through time with equal pride" (19).

The tower image has become that of a bell tower, and the brevity of the single life the doubles share is evoked in the image of "All hours clapped dense." When the speaker asks forgiveness "for an echo of these things," he alludes not simply to the fact that the interdependence of his poetic creativity and his willful excesses is a theme treated in several previous poems

but also to the relationship of the nymph Echo to the myth of Narcissus. We spoke earlier of Freud's theory of the origin of male homosexuality as involving the self's capture in extreme narcissism. Freud invokes the story of Narcissus enchanted by his own reflected image in a pool to depict how a young man's sexual object-choice has become determined by the love-object's resemblance to his own youthful image of himself. But, of course, the story of the nymph Echo is an integral part of Narcissus's myth. As Ovid recounts the story in the *Metamorphoses,* Echo is a maiden captivated by Narcissus's beauty, but in his cold self-centeredness, he rejects her. Echo pines for Narcissus, her body wasting away until she is only a voice and then half a voice, the echo that repeats the last half of whatever is spoken. If the figure of Narcissus is associated with a reflected image (with visual doubling), then the figure of Echo is associated with vocal doubling. Since the speaker in Crane's poem is addressing an aspect of himself that he treats as a narcissistic mirror image, his use of the word *echo* in the poem's penultimate line seems only appropriate, given Echo's function in Ovid's story as a figure of Narcissus's rejection of heterosexual love. Having made a compact with himself, the speaker tells his less than respectable double that he will no longer be ashamed of his excesses and that they should "walk through time with equal pride."

§ 8
"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen"

The twenty-first poem in *White Buildings* is "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," its three sections written between March 1921 and late 1923 and published separately between January 1923 and the winter of 1924. We noted earlier the influence of Goethe's *Faust* (with its scenario of the marriage of modern science and classical beauty) on *The Bridge,* and I would argue that Crane's attention was first called to Goethe's verse play and to the notion of a union of opposites achieved in the person of an individual poet by a memorable passage in Walter Pater's essay in *The Renaissance* on the eighteenth-century German art historian Johann Winckelmann: "Goethe illustrates a union of the Romantic spirit, in its adventure, its variety, its profound subjectivity of soul, with Hellenism, in its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty—that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child, the beautiful lad Euphorion, as Goethe conceives him, on the crags, in the 'splendour of battle and in harness as for victory,' his brows bound with light. Goethe illustrates, too, the preponderance in this marriage of the Hellenic element; and that element, in its true essence, was made known to him by Winckelmann" (*Renaissance* 181).

Pater explains the "true essence" of Hellenism that Goethe had learned from reading Winckelmann's writings on ancient Greek art: "*Heiterkeit*—blitheness or repose, and *Allgemeinheit*—generality or breadth are . . . the supreme characteristics of the Hellenic ideal" (*Renaissance* 170). Pater ar-

but also to the relationship of the nymph Echo to the myth of Narcissus. We spoke earlier of Freud's theory of the origin of male homosexuality as involving the self's capture in extreme narcissism. Freud invokes the story of Narcissus enchanted by his own reflected image in a pool to depict how a young man's sexual object-choice has become determined by the love-object's resemblance to his own youthful image of himself. But, of course, the story of the nymph Echo is an integral part of Narcissus's myth. As Ovid recounts the story in the *Metamorphoses,* Echo is a maiden captivated by Narcissus's beauty, but in his cold self-centeredness, he rejects her. Echo pines for Narcissus, her body wasting away until she is only a voice and then half a voice, the echo that repeats the last half of whatever is spoken. If the figure of Narcissus is associated with a reflected image (with visual doubling), then the figure of Echo is associated with vocal doubling. Since the speaker in Crane's poem is addressing an aspect of himself that he treats as a narcissistic mirror image, his use of the word *echo* in the poem's penultimate line seems only appropriate, given Echo's function in Ovid's story as a figure of Narcissus's rejection of heterosexual love. Having made a compact with himself, the speaker tells his less than respectable double that he will no longer be ashamed of his excesses and that they should "walk through time with equal pride."

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gues that Greek sculpture "unveils man in the repose of his unchanging characteristics" (170) and that "it allows passion to play lightly over the surface of the individual form, losing thereby nothing of the central impassivity, its depth and repose" (173). He describes this quality later as "the highest expression of the indifference which lies beyond all that is relative or partial" (174)—not so much a sublime indifference as the indifference of the sublime, its absolute blitheness. Pater uses the word *repose* some nine times in the essay, in one instance recalling that Winckelmann compares Greek sculpture "to a quiet sea, which, although we understand it to be in motion, we nevertheless regard as an image of repose" (174). One thinks of Crane's "Repose of Rivers" and its journey downriver to the sea, and of images (like that in "Paraphrase") of death that "Involves the hands in purposeless repose" (12) or in "The Wine Menagerie" of "some flame of gaunt repose" (17). One also recalls that he considered the great suspension bridge at the heart of his epic an image of power in repose evoked in the lines from "To Brooklyn Bridge": "Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,— / Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!" And he told Waldo Frank in an August 3, 1926, letter that the "Powhatan's Daughter" section of *The Bridge* "must be" his epic's "basic center and antecedent of all motion—'power in repose'" (479).

In the sentence immediately following the paragraph quoted earlier describing the union of the Romantic and the Hellenic in Goethe's character, Pater returns to his definition of what the Hellenic means, in effect issuing a challenge to contemporary artists to duplicate that marriage of ancient and modern achieved by Goethe: "Breadth, centrality, with blitheness and repose, are the marks of Hellenic culture. Is such culture a lost art? The local, accidental colouring of its own age has passed from it; and the greatness that is dead looks greater when every link with what is slight and vulgar has been severed. We can only see it at all in the reflected, refined light which a great education creates for us. Can we bring down that ideal into the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life?" (*Renaissance* 181–82). In "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," Crane addresses this challenge by trying to bring the classical ideal of beauty personified by Helen into the modern world and thus, by implication, uniting the classic and modern impulses in his own person as a poet, in much the same way that Pater claims Goethe did.

"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" begins with a lengthy epigraph from Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist* (1610):

> *And so we may arrive by Talmud skill*
> *And profane Greek to raise the building up*
> *Of Helen's house against the Ismaelite,*
> *King of Thogarma, and his habergeons*
> *Brimstony, blue and fiery, and the force*
> *Of King Abaddon, and the beast of Cittim;*
> *Which Rabbi David Kimchi, Onkelos,*
> *And Aben Ezra do interpret Rome.* (19)

The lines are spoken in Act IV, scene 5, by Dol Common who, in a pretended fit of madness, is trying to gull Sir Epicure Mammon. The lines are full of the sort of learned gibberish that Jonson makes the play's other two con men, Subtle the alchemist and his helper Face, use when discussing the alchemical process with prospective dupes. Crane invokes this passage from *The Alchemist* because, of course, Faust was an alchemist, and because Jonson in the next scene has another character in the play compare the pretended alchemist Subtle to "Faustus / That casteth figures and can conjure" (288).

But the real force of the epigraph only comes through when compared to Pater's description of Winckelmann's devotion to the world of ancient Greece. Pater notes that Winckelmann's "affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual" because "the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it," as "proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men," friendships that brought him "into contact with the pride of human form" and "perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture" (*Renaissance* 152). Pater then contends, "To most of us, after all our steps towards it, the antique world, in spite of its intense outlines, its own perfect self-expression, still remains faint and remote," but to Winckelmann "closely limited except on the side of the ideal, building for his dark poverty 'a house not made with hands,' it early came to seem more real than the present" (142). On the one hand, we have Winckelmann's total identification with the world of ancient Greece imaged as his "building" himself "a house not made with hands" and, on the other, the sense in the Jonson epigraph of a magical incantation of words that "by Talmud skill / And profane Greek" will "raise the building up / Of Helen's house." One can well imagine that Crane saw the link between the two "buildings" as well as their further connection both to his own project in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and to the overarching notion of his poems as "white buildings," as houses of the spirit not made with hands but words. (Earlier we noted that Pater's essays on Dionysus in *Greek Studies* were as important an influence on, and as significant an allusive background for, the Dionysian themes in *White Buildings* as Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy.* I would further suggest that Pater's essay on Winckelmann was almost as influential for Crane's writing, with several ideas and images from that essay turning up at significant moments in Crane's work.)

Anticipating the scene in the first two stanzas of "To Brooklyn Bridge," where workers cooped up in an office building look out wistfully at the freedom of a bird soaring above the Statue of Liberty, Crane evokes the workaday world of modern urbanites in the opening stanzas of "Faustus and Helen": "Across the stacked partitions of the day— / Across the memoranda, baseball scores, / The stenographic smiles and stock quotations / Smutty wings flash out equivocations. // The mind is brushed by sparrow wings" (19). The phrase "stock quotations" evokes the bull market of the 1920s, and the description of these multitudes crowding the streets on their way to and from work continues the stock market imagery: "Numbers, rebuffed by asphalt, crowd / The margins of the day, accent the curbs,

/ Convoying divers dawns on every corner / To druggist, barber and tobacconist" (19–20). Just as "The margins of the day" suggests the risky practice of buying stocks on margin, so "accent the curbs" evokes the New York Curb Exchange, the stock exchange that began in 1842 as brokers gathered at the curbstone on Broad Street and Exchange Place in Manhattan and that changed its name to the American Stock Exchange in 1953. In figuring the crowds on their way to work in terms of the ceaseless flow of numbers in "stock quotations," Crane suggests how the world of business, of "getting and spending," marginalizes our days and curbs the pursuit of beauty. The three types of workers Crane singles out—"druggist, barber and tobacconist"—were known in the 1920s for being purveyors of stock market tips, but Crane's choice of these three may also echo something from Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. One of the play's characters whom the alchemist Subtle gulls is Drugger, a tobacconist—a figure representing all those characters in the play whom the alchemist cons precisely because they try to get rich quick, paying Subtle to cast spells for them or use the philosopher's stone to turn base metal into gold—much like those druggists, barbers, and tobacconists who try to get rich by buying stocks on margin. Just as in the opening stanzas of "To Brooklyn Bridge" the movement of the workers away from the office back to their personal lives occurs when "*elevators drop us from our day*" (33), so in "Faustus and Helen," as the crowds in the street head home from work, "the graduate opacities of evening / Take them away as suddenly to somewhere / Virginal perhaps, less fragmentary, cool" (20).

Crane evokes this passage of individuals into another world as being a movement in his case from the hectic world of business into something resembling the world of "higher consciousness" that he had read of in P. D. Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*: "*There is the world dimensional for / those untwisted by the love of things / irreconcilable . . .* " (20). This prose insertion in the poem is a reworking of lines from his unpublished 1920–21 poem "The Bridge of Estador": "But some are twisted with the love / Of things irreconcilable,— / The slant moon with the slanting hill" (116). The "Faustus and Helen" lines reflect Ouspensky's contention in *Tertium Organum* that those who possess the higher consciousness are able to exist at moments in a higher dimension of reality, a fourth dimension in which the mutually exclusive oppositions characterizing the world of three-dimensional space are reconciled. Arguing that "*extension in time* is extension into unknown space" and that "therefore time is *the fourth dimension of space*" Ouspensky in a combination of pseudoscientific and quasi-mystical imagery describes the "expansion of now" (that constitutes the fourth dimension) as being in effect eternity. He cautions, however, that "*eternity* is not the infinite dimension of time, but the one *perpendicular to time,*" perpendicular to the line of time that "extends in that order of succession of phenomena which are in causal interdependence" (40).

Recall that Crane had told his friend Gorham Munson in a June 1922 letter about a "thrilling experience this last winter in the dentist's chair when under the influence of aether and *amnesia* my mind spiraled to a kind

of seventh heaven of consciousness . . . and something like an objective voice kept saying to me—'You have the higher consciousness—you have the higher consciousness.'" Crane continues, "A happiness, ecstatic such as I have known only twice in 'inspirations' came over me. I felt the two worlds. And at once . . . O Gorham, I have known moments in eternity" (281–82). The two worlds Crane refers to are those of time and eternity, with the latter understood as a higher dimension of reality. In this same letter Crane reported that he had begun working on the first part of "Faustus and Helen." The experience Crane recounts would have occurred in the winter of 1921–22 and Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* was published in 1920, but Crane would already have been familiar with the notion of the higher consciousness from R. M. Bucke's book *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901). Crane reported in a February 15, 1923, letter to Allen Tate that he had "enjoyed reading Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* lately. Its corroboration of several experiences in consciousness that I have had gave it particular interest" (321), and only a week before in a February 7 letter to Waldo Frank, Crane had given a lengthy explanation of his intentions in "Faustus and Helen":

> The whole poem is a kind of fusion of our time with the past . . . Helen, the symbol of this abstract "sense of beauty," Faustus the symbol of myself, the poetic or imaginative man of all times. The street car device is the most concrete symbol I could find for the transition of the imagination from quotidian details to the universal consideration of beauty,—the body still "centered in traffic," the imagination eluding its daily nets and self consciousness . . .
>
> Part II is, of course, the DANCE and sensual culmination. It is also an acceleration to the ecstasy of PART III. This last part begins with *catharsis,* the acceptance of tragedy through destruction (The Fall of Troy, etc. also in it). It is Dionysian in its attitude, the creator and the eternal destroyer dance arm in arm, etc. all ending as a restatement of the imagination as in part I. (316–17)

Crane uses the prose passage about "*those untwisted by the love of things / irreconcilable*" to introduce what he calls in the Frank letter "the street car device" for his imaginative vision of Helen: "And yet, suppose some evening I forgot / The fare and transfer, yet got by that way / Without recall,—lost yet poised in traffic, / Then I might find your eyes across an aisle" (20). Crane was to employ variations of this device (in which a movement through space on a public conveyance becomes a movement back in time) several times in his poetry: in the "Van Winkle" section of *The Bridge* the quester and Van Winkle board a subway car to begin the imaginative journey back into American history, and in "The Tunnel" the quester on the subway passing beneath the East River has a vision of Poe, the author of the poem "To Helen." Clearly, Crane mined the longer, multipart poems in *White Buildings* for (or used them to test out) structures and devices he would employ in his longest poem.

Gazing at his imaginative vision of ideal beauty personified as Helen, the speaker says, "There is some way, I think, to touch / Those hands of yours that count the nights / Stippled with pink and green advertisements" (20), the pink and green advertisements (perhaps in neon lights) calling

to mind Pater's challenge to future artists to "bring down that ideal into the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life." The speaker's trajectory from the ideal to the real, from having an imaginative vision of Helen to finding some way to touch her hands, recalls the movement in Goethe's *Faust,* from Faust's first calling up an image of Helen by magic to his traveling back in time to wed her. And the way that the speaker in "Faustus and Helen" finds to touch her hands, to render the ideal tangible, is by identifying Helen with the natural world:

> Reflective conversion of all things
> At your deep blush, when ecstasies thread
> The limbs and belly, when rainbows spread
> Impinging on the throat and sides . . .
> Inevitable, the body of the world
> Weeps in inventive dust for the hiatus
> That winks above it, bluet in your breast. (20)

As the body of the most beautiful woman becomes the body of the world, the deep blush on her limbs and belly become rainbows in this "reflective conversion of all things." Crane would use this same structure in *The Bridge* when he chose the Indian maiden Pocahontas as "the mythological nature-symbol . . . to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil" (554). And just as Helen's body, transformed into "the body of the world," bears bluet flowers in its breast, so in "The Dance" Pocahontas's body as the continent feels the "winds across the llano grass resume / Her hair's warm sibilance" until "Her breasts are fanned / O stream by slope and vineyard—into bloom!" (48). But if the way to make the idealized beauty of Helen's body tangible is to identify it with "the body of the world," then that also makes it temporal and mortal, so that the world's body of "inventive dust" "weeps . . . for the hiatus" (the gap, the separated portion) "That winks above it" (the sky or heavens, the realm of the ideal). Note that these lines are introduced by the image of "rainbows . . . / Impinging on" the body's "throat and sides," and recall that the arc of the rainbow is evoked frequently in Crane's epic as a bridge between earth and heaven, echoing the image Poe uses in "Descent into the Maelstrom" of "a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity" (Poe, *Collected* 2:591).

The image of the temporal world's mortality continues in the next stanza and metamorphoses into details of Helen's story, of her becoming the ideal form of beauty: "The earth may glide diaphanous to death; / But if I lift my arms it is to bend / To you who turned away once, Helen, knowing / The press of troubled hands, too alternate / With steel and soil to hold you endlessly" (20). Crane had said in the February 7, 1923, letter to Waldo Frank that the poem's first part also had, besides standing "simply for the EVOCATION of beauty," the "significance of the rape of Helen by Paris" (316), but this reference to Helen's "knowing / The press of troubled hands" seems to have been influenced more by a passage in Goethe's *Faust* where Helen recounts how she had been carried off or wooed by a variety

of suitors (Theseus, Castor and Pollux, Patroclus) before she was married to Menelaus and then carried off to Troy by Paris. In Goethe's play Faust journeys back in time to Menelaus's palace to find Helen, just returned from Troy, and bear her away once more to marry her. But the speaker in Crane's poem says that if he lifts his arms it is not to carry her off but to bend as if in homage, and he continues: "I meet you, therefore, in that eventual flame / You found in final chains, no captive then— / Beyond their million, brittle bloodshot eyes; / White, through white cities passed on to assume / That world which comes to each of us alone" (21).

If "the world glides diaphanous to death," then this movement of earthly things from the opacity of solid objects to a condition of transparency or translucency as death approaches recalls that structure we discussed earlier in which the movement from a three-dimensional solid object to its two-dimensional, lighted outline (the figuration of a Platonic form) signifies the movement from matter to spirit, time to eternity, the real to the ideal. And this is the movement that the figure of Helen seems to undergo here: from the speaker's trying to find some way to touch Helen's hands by identifying her with the body of the world, to his lifting his hands to her in homage but refusing to bear her away, and on to her becoming, even though in chains, no captive of the material world because she has become an ideal of beauty, identified with "that eventual flame" of deathless desire, the constantly moving flame that signifies survival in a higher realm after death, the intellectual light that surrounds the Platonic form of beauty with its nimbus. In that transformation from the real to the ideal, the material Helen who passed through many men's hands is restored to an original innocence evoked by the adjective *white* and becomes the ideal of classical beauty "passed on" down the ages through "white cities" devoted to that culture, until in the speaker's time and place that world of ancient culture is one "that comes to each of us alone" as individuals like the speaker try to make it real in their lives. In the Winckelmann essay, Pater, discussing sculpture as the primary art form in which the ancient Greeks embodied the ideal of beauty, evokes the way the passage of time has worn away the color the Greeks had applied to their statues to leave only the whiteness of the marble, taking this weathering process as a metaphor for the way the real became the ideal as "the local, accidental colouring of its own age has passed from it" to reveal the whiteness of pure form: "it unveils man in the repose of his unchanging characteristics. That white light, purged from the angry, blood-like stains of action and passion, reveals, not what is accidental in man, but the tranquil godship in him" (*Renaissance* 170). What Pater understands as the idealizing quality of that white light, its "breadth and centrality, with blitheness and repose," is what Crane means in applying the word *white* to Helen.

Part I of the poem ends with the speaker pledging to keep that ideal of beauty always in view: "Accept a lone eye riveted to your plane, / Bent axle of devotion along companion ways / That beat, continuous, to hourless days— / One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise" (21). Critics have suggested that the image of "a lone eye riveted to your plane" alludes to

Crane's interpretation of the drawing that William Lescaze, the young Swiss artist and architect that Crane had known in Cleveland, had made of Crane in the fall of 1921, a "'futuristic' portrait" showing Crane with "a heavily accented right eye." Unterecker notes, "Amused with the drawing, Crane told his friends that Lescaze had discovered in him Jakob Boehme's visionary man—the right eye focused on the future and eternity, the left turned backward into time" (Unterecker 260). Crane would have known of Boehme from Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* and known of the right eye/left eye distinction from a passage in Boehme's writings quoted in *Tertium Organum*: "The Right eye looketh in thee into Eternity. The Left Eye looketh backward in thee into time . . . Let not thy Left Eye deceive thee, by making continually one representation after another, and stirring up thereby an earnest longing in the self-propriety; but let the Right Eye command back this Left . . . And only bringing the Eye of Time into the Eye of Eternity . . . and descending through the Light of God into the Light of Nature . . . shalt thou arrive at the Unity of Vision or Uniformity of Will" (Ouspensky 257).

The reference to Helen's "plane" evokes the realm of the ideal as a higher dimension of reality, eternity as a fourth dimension, "the one *perpendicular to time,*" as Ouspensky says, and the action of keeping the right eye riveted to that plane while traveling "along companion ways" in the realm of time has bent the axle of the poet's devotion, in effect, left the poet "twisted with the love / Of things irreconcilable." But since *bent* and *twisted* were in Crane's day words often used to characterize his particular sexual orientation, it would seem that, besides evoking the notion of Dionysian excess as a necessary condition of his poetic creativity, Crane also suggests that his absolute devotion to beauty has left him caught between two realms—time and eternity, the modern and the classic—as he tries to effect in his own person the marriage of Faustus and Helen. As the eye that looks into eternity becomes "One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise," one thinks not only of Plato's perfect form (the sphere) and of the sun as a material symbol of intellectual light, but of that famous image from Emerson's *Nature*: "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball" (Emerson 1:10). Indeed, in reading Emerson, and particularly a work such as *Nature,* with sections titled "Beauty," "Language," "Idealism," and "Spirit," Crane would have been prepared for almost everything he found in Pater, Bucke, and Ouspensky.

Part II of "Faustus and Helen" is, as Crane told Frank, "the DANCE and sensual culmination," its setting one of those roof-garden restaurants or nightclubs atop a Manhattan hotel or Broadway theater so popular during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Recall that in Marlowe's play Faustus, having made his pact with Mephistopheles, is given the ability to fly: the chorus says in Act II, scene 3 that Faust, seated in "a chariot burning bright" drawn by dragons, "Did mount him up to scale Olympus top" where "He views the clouds, the planets, and the stars" and "measures coasts and kingdoms of the earth" (Marlowe 294). And since Crane under-

stands the Faustus of his poem as "a symbol of myself, the poetic or imaginative man of all times," Faustus's association with magical flight seems an appropriate analogue for the soaring poetic flights of a speaker whose gaze is fixed upon a higher plane. From the ending of Part I of "Faustus and Helen" (with the speaker pledging his devotion to poetic heights) there is, then, a natural imagistic transition to the physical heights of Part II, the rooftop garden where "Brazen hypnotics glitter" and "Glee shifts from foot to foot" to the raucous music of a jazz band, this "Blest excursion! this ricochet / From roof to roof— / Know, Olympians, we are breathless / While nigger cupids scour the stars!" (21). Since the modern young people on a Manhattan building's rooftop have ascended to physical heights that rival Mount Olympus, they familiarly hail their fellow "Olympians" (or are ironically hailed by the speaker as "Olympians"), with perhaps an allusion to Faustus's dragon-drawn chariot ride "to scale Olympus top" and view "the planets, and the stars" resonating in the image of the "nigger cupids that scour the stars," a reference either to black waiters in the nightclub or to the members of a black jazz band who shake down the stars with their music. Crane's invocation of "Olympians" also prefigures the poem's subsequent imagery that draws on Helen's association with the Trojan War and on the voyages of Odysseus and Aeneas.

Since the roof-garden dance floor is outdoors, Crane evokes the raucous jazz as if it were stormy weather ("A thousand light shrugs balance us / Through snarling hails of melody"), with the syncopated music and dancing continuing till dawn ("Rhythmic ellipses lead into canters / Until somewhere a rooster banters"). But if the young dancers have risen to Olympian heights, they run the risk of a fall, just as a poet in trying to soar into the realm of the eternal and the ideal may find himself suspended above "the nameless gulf" that grants "The plummet heart, like Absalom, no stream." (These scenarios of ascension and descent or the reverse occur with a certain regularity in Crane's poetry, but more of this when we come to Part III.) At this point in stanza 3 a "fall" (either a drunken tumble of the dancers or a sexual dalliance) is seen as permissible: "And you may fall downstairs with me / With perfect grace and equanimity." Crane then evokes these young people as if they were adventurous voyagers into an unexplored realm of social conduct, voyagers like Odysseus: "Or, plaintively scud past shores / Where, by strange harmonic laws / All relatives, serene and cool, / Sit rocked in patent armchairs" (21). "Scud," meaning "to run before a gale," would have had its nautical resonance established from its context in *Moby-Dick* where Crane found it, and Crane would use the word again in just such a context when Columbus describes in "Ave Maria" his storm-tossed vessel "under bare poles scudding." Since the relatives are rocked by "strange harmonic laws" (clearly a more sedate harmony than the syncopated music of the dancers), one might assume that these elders are being assimilated to mariners whose ships have been captured by the sirens whose song threatened to shipwreck Odysseus, an allusion that looks ahead to a further variation of the siren image in the poem's last stanza.

In the fourth stanza the speaker continues the imagery of an Odysseus-

like voyager who in his travels has seen strange sights: "O, I have known metallic paradises / Where cuckoos clucked to finches / Above the deft catastrophes of drums." The image of cuckoos and finches taken in connection with the "metallic paradises" may well be meant to remind one of those mechanical golden birds that the Byzantine emperor Theophilos had his Grecian goldsmiths make and place in a brass tree near his throne, the same mechanical birds that Yeats invokes at the end of "Sailing to Byzantium" (the poem that begins "That is no country for old men"). But Crane's cuckoos that cluck to finches is also a satiric evocation of the artificial types who congregate in this metallic garden, and the "deft catastrophe of drums" an ironic displacement on to the jazz music of the notion of a catastrophic fall in young people's morals. Stanza 4 continues: "While titters hailed the groans of death / Beneath gyrating awnings I have seen / The incunabula of the divine grotesque." A Manhattan roof garden restaurant would have had a retractable awning, and the fact that it is "gyrating" evokes the uninhibited dancing going on beneath it, "the groans of death" being the mock protestations of those who have drunk and danced too much and the "titters" the responses of those heartier young folk who continue partying. (But these "groans of death" taken in a literal sense also prefigure the wartime destruction to be evoked in Part III.) That these youthful dancers living it up on a rooftop were likened in stanza 1 to Homer's divinities on Mount Olympus is what Crane means by calling this scene "the divine grotesque," a modern caricature of ancient sublimity.

Note as well that in describing this as "The incunabula of the divine grotesque," Crane takes advantage of two meanings of *incunabula* and also of its Latin root. One meaning is "the earliest stages or traces of anything," and a more specialized one "the books produced in the infancy of printing (before 1500)." The Latin root of the word means "cradle, beginnings, swaddling clothes." Crane evokes the antics of these so-called jazz babies and in particular of a pretty flapper who functions as a sort of modern counterpart to Helen: "she is still so young, / We cannot frown upon her as she smiles, / Dipping here in this cultivated storm / Among slim skaters of the gardened skies." These young people, "the divine grotesque," are told "Greet naively—yet intrepidly / New soothings, new amazements . . . / And you may fall downstairs with me / With perfect grace and equanimity" (21), for they are still in the earliest stages of that new freedom of social conduct that accompanied bootleg liquor and syncopated rhythm. But note that Crane has the habit in his poetry of describing characters and their actions as if they were already in some sense written down, i.e., fated, or as if the only lasting reality such actions or characters possessed were a function of their being recorded in words. One thinks of the speaker in "The Wine Menagerie" who, observing the barroom and its inhabitants and feeling himself drawn into the setting and its story, says, "I am con*scripted* to their shadows' glow" (italics mine). And again in Part III of "Faustus and Helen" (in a line meant to echo the image in Part I of "the body of the world" that "Weeps in inventive dust"), the speaker evokes "The abating shadows of our conscript dust." Given the World War I imagery that begins Part

III, one of the resonances of the word *conscript* is the military draft, so that "our conscript dust" evokes human mortality as something compulsory, like the death that might result from military service. But even the word *draft* evokes the image of writing, and in its military usage *draft* like the word *conscription* simply means having one's name written down with other names on a roll. All of which is to suggest that Crane's habit of treating actions and characters as if they were already scripted is at work again in implicitly comparing these jazz babies, "the incunabula of the divine grotesque," to the infancy of printed books.

At the start of Part II's last stanza, the young flapper is ironically described as "The siren of the springs of guilty song," the "guilty song" clearly being jazz, the music that the older generation in the 1920s partly blamed for the decline of young people's morals. Its critics derided jazz as "jungle music," claiming the word *jazz* derived from *jizz,* evocative of the music's origin in New Orleans brothels. The description of the flapper as a siren, as a temptress or a vamp, is again one of those hyperbolic ascriptions (like his calling the young people "Olympians") meant to measure the distance between the ancient sublime and the modern grotesque. The speaker says of the young woman: "Let us take her on the incandescent wax, / Striated with nuances, nervosities / We are heir to." Though what the speaker means is "let us take her in, let us observe her," the connotation of "let us carry her off" underlines the young woman's assimilation to the figure of Helen. Earlier, we mentioned that the imagery of "the incandescent wax, / Striated with nuances, nervosities / We are heir to" apparently referred to the dance floor, waxed to make dancing easier. Of course, any highly waxed floor would show the trace of dancers' feet as striations and the fact that the wax is described as "incandescent" merely suggests that the youngsters are dancing to hot music.

As Part I ends with the speaker's gaze fixed on a spiritual height (an elevated plane of consciousness represented by ideal beauty) and Part II is set at a physical height on a rooftop, so the opening of Part III maintains this imagery of heights, both physical and spiritual. The section begins with a flight of airplanes approaching a city on a bombing run, with one of the pilots being addressed as "The capped arbiter of beauty in this street / That narrows darkly into motor dawn." In placing the bombing raid at dawn (the moment of recurring enlightenment in his poetry), Crane makes the exploding bomb flashes invert the notion of enlightenment as they darken the street. And this same irony is at work in his description of the pilot as the arbiter of "beauty," for what the reader knows is that the pilot does not so much decide aesthetics as existence. With this opening, Crane establishes the historical context as World War I, setting up the comparison between the bombing of a city and "The Fall of Troy," as he says in the letter to Frank. But since, as he also told Frank, this section is "Dionysian in its attitude, the creator and destroyer" dancing "arm in arm," Crane evokes this dual aspect of creation and destruction in two ambiguous epithets applied to the pilot: the "arbiter of beauty" and the "religious gunman" (later called the "eternal gunman"). The religious gunman in his airplane is responsible

for the street's "intricate slain numbers that arise / In whispers" (22), an image meant to counterpoint the lines in Part I where "Smutty wings flash out equivocations" above the workers in the street returning home who are described as "Numbers, rebuffed by asphalt" that "crowd / The margins of the day" (19). But as with all soaring to heights (either poetic or physical) in Crane's poetry, the possibility (if not inevitability) of a fall is never far away. The speaker tells the religious gunman: "faithfully, yourself, will fall too soon, / And in other ways than as the wind settles / On the sixteen thrifty bridges of the city: / Let us unbind our throats of fear and pity" (22), a crash that points forward to the "Cape Hatteras" episode in which the airplane is shot down and smashes into the Cape, the spot where powered flight first began.

In Part II of "Faustus and Helen," the mention of a fall downstairs refers both to a drunken tumble of the young dancers and a moral fall into sexual dalliance, while in Part III the plane's physical fall punishes the moral fall of its pilot in bombing civilians. In repeating this structure of a fall from the heights, Crane alludes to an episode in Goethe's marriage of Faustus and Helen: the attempt of Faustus and Helen's son Euphorion to fly and the death that results. In Act III of the second part of *Faust,* set in Arcadia, Euphorion from the moment of his birth aspires to the heights, causing his mother to warn him, "beware of flying: flight unfettered is denied to thee" (Goethe 274). While Euphorion covets physical flight, he also seeks poetic flights: he is described, with "the golden lyre" in his hands, as being "completely like a little Phoebus" (274). As he climbs from one peak to the next, mounting ever higher, his parents lament, "Oh what madness! Oh what daring! / There's no hope of moderation" (279), while the chorus, looking on, intone, "Hallowed Poesy, / Soar aloft heavenly, / Shine on, thou fairest star, / Farther and still more far" (281–82). At last having reached the topmost crag, Euphorion, in the words of the stage directions, "*casts himself into the air, his garments bear him up for a moment, his head is irradiated, a trail of light follows him,*" and the chorus cries out, "Icarus! Icarus!" as "*The beautiful lad falls at his parents' feet*" (Goethe 283).

In layering the fall of Euphorion beneath the bomber pilot's crash, Crane meant to take advantage of a further resemblance between the two, for Goethe presents Euphorion, climbing from crag to crag, as a warrior in search of ever more desperate battles, singing songs in praise of war: "Dream ye of days of peace? / Dream on whom dreams may please! / 'War' is the signal cry, / Echoed by 'Victory!'" (Goethe 281). And again: "A youth in armour I come on, / Who, joined with strong men, free and daring, / Great deeds in spirit now has done . . . / In dust and foam, in fierce commotion / Host charges host in weltering blood, / And for all / 'Death!"s the call, / That of course is understood" (282). The figure of Euphorion, as a poet whose "madness" and "daring" knew no "hope of moderation" even unto death, must have also had a certain appeal for Crane, offering him yet another personification of that Dionysian "excess" he invoked in his poems. Given that Part III of "Faustus and Helen" was "Dionysian in its attitude, the creator and the eternal destroyer dance arm in arm," there is

yet another possible reference here to a detail from the Euphorion episode in *Faust*: at one point as Euphorion is climbing to new heights, he and the chorus do an "interlocking dance" (278), and Euphorion exclaims, "O all ye lithesome / Roes never staying / Quickly and blithesome, / On, to new playing! / I am the hunter / Ye are the game" (Goethe 279). As Crane knew from reading Pater's essays on Dionysus, one of the god's titles was "Dionysus *the Hunter*" (*Greek* 128). Crane had also told Frank in the same letter that Part III "begins with *catharsis,* the acceptance of tragedy through destruction," hence, the line "Let us unbind our throats of fear and pity," the two emotions Aristotle associates in the *Poetics* with tragic catharsis.

In the second, third, and fourth stanzas of Part III, Crane evokes the aerial bombardment, the speaker sharing the point of view both of the pilots and of those being bombed. It is almost as if in these stanzas Crane were testing whether the sense of ideal beauty personified by Helen could in fact be brought down into "the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life" by seeing if a World War I bombing raid could be made "poetic." Thus the flights of airplanes are described as "corymbulous formations of mechanics,— / Who hurried the hill breezes, spouting malice / Plangent over meadows" (22). In comparing the V-shaped formation of the airplanes to a corymb, a cluster "in which the flower stalks arise at different levels on the main axis and reach about the same height," Crane in effect assimilates these machines to the natural landscape over which they soar, those "meadows" that have become "plangent" (reverberating with the mournful sound of engines)—almost as if the scenario of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" had been mechanized. From the countryside, the flight of planes is soon above the city, and the speaker, identifying with the pilots, "looked down / On rifts of torn and empty houses / Like old women with teeth unjubilant / That waited faintly, briefly and in vain" (22), the image of devastated homes perhaps owing a debt to Eliot's "ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots" (*Complete* 13) from the "Preludes." In stanza 4 the speaker identifies himself with those who have suffered "the vertical / Repeated play of fire" from the skies, and though "no hypogeum / Of wave or rock," no ancient subterranean arched vault, could withstand the bombardment, the speaker affirms we "have survived, / And will persist to speak again before" the memory of this devastation is allowed to lapse or another war begins, the latter possibility being evoked as "the ominous lifted arm / That lowers down the arc of Helen's brow" (the dropping of the lifted arm that signals "Bombs away!" or "Fire!"). Helen is invoked here because she was, of course, the cause of the Trojan War but also to recall the image of another lifted arm in Part I when the speaker says, "But if I lift my arms it is to bend / To you who turned away once, Helen, knowing / The press of troubled hands" (20).

As the speaker had feared that with the coming of peace people might forget the trauma of war and be ready to fight again in a generation, so stanza 5 evokes the return to normal life at the war's end and the attempt to come to terms with that trauma: "A goose, tobacco and cologne— / Three winged and gold-shod prophecies of heaven." The trio of items are typical

examples of material things that were in short supply during wartime but have become available once again with the peace. Although one might be tempted to associate this threesome with the "barber, druggist and tobacconist" of Part I by linking barber or druggist to cologne and tobacconist to tobacco, that leaves us with the goose as the odd bird out. Yet as material goods these items represent, in Harding's phrase, "the return to normalcy," and, to the extent that Crane invokes them as physical embodiments of "the good," they are described as "prophecies" of that greater spiritual good associated with the peace of heaven. Crane's description of them as "three winged" is, I take it, simply a poetic phrase for threefold, and in referring to them as "gold-shod" in relation to heaven, he may have in mind lines from the nineteenth-century minstrel song "Oh! Dem Golden Slippers" whose refrain ends, "Golden slippers I'se gwine to wear / To walk de golden street." The "goose, tobacco and cologne" are instanced as items "The lavish heart shall always have to leaven / And spread with bells and voices, and atone / The abating shadows of our conscript dust" (23). (R. W. B. Lewis suggests that Crane's phrase "lavish heart" may have been influenced by lines in Melville's poem "On the Slain Collegians": "All lavish hearts, on whichever side, / Of birth urbane or courage high, / Armed them for the stirring wars" [117 n.].) Though the lavish heart enjoys the material goods associated with peace and prosperity, it also tries not to forget those who died in the war (the previous line's mention of heaven having called up an image of the dead). It tries to remember through religious and civic memorials, the poem's "bells and voices" (like the ringing of church bells at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Armistice Day), an atonement to the shades of the conscripted dead whose memories have already begun to abate with the passage of time.

With the next stanza the poem returns to the theme that Crane had told Frank in the February 7, 1923, letter was the overall point of the poem: the "fusion of our time with the past" or, as Pater phrased it, the effort to "bring down that ideal" of ancient culture "into the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life." Crane begins by evoking two earlier instances of such an effort: the first, the ancient saving of a culture in the wake of war's destruction and the second, the rebirth of classical culture in the Renaissance: "Anchises' navel, dripping of the sea,— / The hands Erasmus dipped in gleaming tides, / Gathered the voltage of blown blood and vine; / Delve upward for the new and scattered wine, / O brother thief of time, that we recall" (23). Crane had told Frank that Part III of the poem included "The Fall of Troy," and the reference to Anchises calls up the image of Aeneas fleeing the burning city with his aged father on his shoulders and leading his son Ascanius by the hand. Aeneas's saving of his father and son, his household gods, and his band of followers from the fallen city insured that Trojan culture would survive and be reborn in Rome, ultimately dominating the ancient world. That "Anchises' navel" is described as "dripping of the sea" calls up the image of Aeneas carrying his father through the waves to his ship, with "navel" also connoting a birth image as if bearing Anchises away constituted the rebirth of Troy. The birth association is further reinforced

by the sea image, the birthplace of Aeneas's mother, Venus, sprung from the sea foam. Given that the mention of Anchises evokes the fall of Troy and Aeneas's escape from the city as narrated in the *Aeneid,* Book II, that same context sheds further light on the line in stanza 4: "the ominous lifted arm / That lowers down the arc of Helen's brow" (23). Having witnessed the slaughter of Priam during the sack of Troy, Aeneas comes upon Helen hiding herself in the palace near the shrine of Vesta. Carried away with anger at the destruction she has caused, he rushes forward with upraised sword to strike her down and kill her. But suddenly his mother Venus appears and intervenes, telling him that Troy's destruction was not Helen's fault but the will of the gods and that he must waste no more time and hurry home to save Anchises, Creusa, and Ascanius. What is perhaps most significant about Crane's invocation of Anchises in Part III of "Faustus and Helen" is that it shows that as early as 1923 Crane was thinking about the *Aeneid* in relation to the structure of the *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage, which is to say, was contemplating layering the mating in a thunderstorm of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas in "The Dance" on top of the mating of Aeneas and Dido as Rome and Carthage in the *Aeneid,* Book 4.

From Anchises Crane turns to Desiderius Erasmus, the Dutch priest and Renaissance scholar, who championed the cause of classical learning and who, as it happens, had invoked Anchises in his most famous work *The Praise of Folly* (1511). As a scholar engaged in the work of recovering ancient culture, Erasmus is said to dip his hands "in gleaming tides," an image that links back to the "dripping of the sea" in the previous line and that evokes, given the basic meaning of "tides" as "times," his delving into the brilliant past. But I would suggest that Crane is also playing here on a similarity in names, which is to say, that the name of the Renaissance scholar-priest Erasmus recalls that of St. Erasmus, the Christian bishop of Formiae in Italy who was martyred under the Emperor Diocletian in the fourth century AD. In a famous seventeenth-century painting by Poussin, *The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus,* the saint is shown with his abdomen slit open and his intestines being wound out on a windlass, the latter detail deriving from various ancient and medieval representations of the saint showing him with the instrument of his torture.

Whether the cause or the result of his being associated with a windlass, St. Erasmus was the patron saint of sailors, and particularly of sailors caught in storms. St. Erasmus's name was corrupted over the years to St. Ermo and then to St. Elmo, and the natural phenomenon of atmospheric static electricity during a storm became known as St. Elmo's fire, the notion being that the patron saint of sailors showed his presence when they were in danger through the glowing light about his sanctified body. Crane would probably have first become aware of St. Erasmus and his lore from reading *Moby-Dick* where, in the chapter "The Candles," the Pequod, making its way through a storm, suddenly has its mast, spars, rigging, and even the men's harpoons enveloped in St. Elmo's fire, and the first mate Starbuck cries out, "Look aloft! . . . The corpusants! The corpusants!" with Stubb echoing, "The corpusants have mercy on us all!" (Melville 639). Crane

could have found in any dictionary that the corpusant or corposant was St. Elmo's fire and that the word derived from the Latin *corpus sanctus,* meaning "holy body." He could also have learned St. Erasmus's legend from a book of martyrs or a lives of the saints, and one could predict this level of interest on Crane's part, given that in "Ave Maria" Crane had Columbus claim that during his voyage God sent him "greeting by the corposant"(37), that is, through the presence of the saint who guarded sailors.

If, as I've suggested, Crane took advantage of the similarity in names to add to the figure of Desiderius Erasmus that of St. Erasmus, what does this add to our understanding of the poem? First, it would account, given St. Erasmus's connection with mariners, for the sea imagery in the opening lines of stanza 6 (the "dripping of the sea" and the "gleaming tides"). Further, since Desiderius Erasmus was a priest and St. Erasmus a bishop, both would, in celebrating Mass, have changed bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, but since St. Erasmus was actually tortured and killed for his belief, he would have dipped his hands in gleaming tides of blood in a more literal sense. Certainly, the painful death of St. Erasmus (though tortured with the windlass, he was ultimately decapitated) would qualify him for membership in that group of masochistic figures (Holofernes, St. John the Baptist, Petrushka, and Maquokeeta) in which Crane had a continuing interest, figures that functioned psychologically for Crane as analogues of the suffering Dionysian artist. And since what the hands of Erasmus are said to gather is "the voltage of blown blood and vine," the substitution of *vine* for the expected *wine* would suggest the reemergence of the classical dying-and-reviving vine god Dionysus through the figure of the Christian dying-and-reviving god Jesus, the same reemergence that had been the subject of "Lachrymae Christi." And when Crane says, "Delve upward for the new and scattered wine, / O brother-thief of time, that we recall," it is as if he were exhorting himself to assist in this reemergence of the ancient god from the buried past by delving upward, much as the vine emerges from beneath the earth, the ancient wine god being made new again in Crane's poetry. The fact that this new wine is described as "scattered" is yet another indication of its Dionysian aura, for the condition of being scattered, the Dionysian *sparagmos* or dismemberment and the scattering of the god's body over the landscape, were integral to his myth as interpreted by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and now is worshiped in this state as Zagreus. Thus it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering,* is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself" (73).

In invoking the "brother-thief of time," Crane harks back to lines in "Passage": "Touching an opening laurel, I found / A thief beneath, my stolen book in hand" (16). The poet addresses time as a brother-thief because though time steals away the moments of our lives, it is Crane himself, through his extravagant, wasteful living, who has stolen away so many moments from his working life that would have brought the opening laurel to

full flowering. But, as in those previous instances when he confronted objections to his conduct of life, Crane finds an answer that justifies him. He may waste time and energy in spendthrift emotional pursuits, but the time he does spend on poetry, which these pursuits somehow fuel, produces results that, in comparison, make the lives of others who are more careful, less given to risking all in Dionysian excess, seem a total waste of existence: "Laugh out the meager penance of their days / Who dare not share with us the breath released, / The substance drilled and spent beyond repair / For golden, or the shadow of gold hair" (28). The image of the "substance drilled and spent" has sexual connotations, echoing the lines in "Legend": "It is to be learned— / This cleaving and this burning, / But only by the one who / Spends out himself again" (3). This language of spending and being spent evokes that Dionysian "scattering" of the self present in the "new and scattered wine," the consuming, the using up of the self in a total commitment to his art, a commitment as great as that of the martyred St. Erasmus tortured to death for his belief.

We noted earlier that golden hair is Crane's metonym for Helen, with the "shadow of gold hair" being Crane's figuration of the Platonic form (the illuminated shadow outline) of Helen as ideal beauty, and further that Crane invokes the image of gold hair again in "The Tunnel," apropos the washerwoman returning home on the subway to her children as an allusion to Helen's returning to the underworld to be with her dead son Euphorion when he calls out to her: "Leave me in realms of death, / Mother, not all alone!" (Goethe 283). Part III of "Faustus and Helen" ends with "a restatement of the imagination," as Crane said in the letter to Frank and with a recurrence of the hand and arm imagery that has appeared at crucial moments in the poem: "Distinctly praise the years, whose volatile / Blamed bleeding hands extend and thresh the height / The imagination spans beyond despair, / Outpacing bargain, vocable and prayer" (23). If, for Crane, hands are associated with the plane of reality, then when the speaker says in Part I that he lifts his arms to Helen because "she turned away once" from the "press of troubled hands," he in effect raises his hands toward that ideal plane identified later in Part I with the "eventual flame," a plane whose demands thresh the hands that thresh or search the height and leave them bleeding. But these hands are associated with "the years," with the passage of time, and Crane's injunction to "Distinctly praise" these years is his acknowledgment that it is only through time that one can hope to touch eternity. In this regard one thinks of the epigraph from Isadora Duncan that Crane appended to "Quaker Hill": "*I see only the ideal. But no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth*" (64). It was the painful distance between the two that drove Crane at so many moments in his life to the point of despair, but what had always sustained him until that last moment of the voyage back from Mexico was the sense of unlimited imaginative aspiration, the sense that one might capture some shadow of ideal beauty in poetry, in words that exceeded the language of business ("bargain") or pure, meaningless sound ("vocable") or pleas to a nonexistent deity ("prayer").

§ 9
"At Melville's Tomb," "Voyages I, II, III"

"At Melville's Tomb," the twenty-second poem in *White Buildings,* was written in October 1925 and published in July 1926, its title recalling Mallarmé's "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe." In Crane's poem Melville's "tomb" is evoked as being both the sea and Melville's writings about the sea, and the first quatrain of Mallarmé's sonnet on Poe sheds light on Crane's project: "Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change, / Le Poète suscite avec un glaive nu / Son siècle épouvanté de n'avoir par connu / Que la mort triomphait dans cette voix étrange!" (Flores 374–75). According to Mallarmé, "eternity finally changed" Poe "into what he was in himself": the poet who "revived with a naked sword / His century, appalled at not having recognized / That death triumphed in this strange voice!" Similarly, the first stanza of Crane's poem evokes Melville as someone who speaks for death, as being a sort of ambassador for those lost at sea: "Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge / The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath / An embassy" (24). Perhaps Crane had in mind these lines from the chapter "Queequeg in His Coffin" in *Moby-Dick*: "And the drawing near of Death, which alike levels all, alike impresses all with a last revelation, which only an author from the dead could adequately tell. So that . . . no dying Chaldee or Greek had higher and holier thoughts than those, whose mysterious shades you saw creeping over the face of poor Queequeg, as he quietly lay in his swaying hammock, and the rolling sea seemed gently rocking him to his final rest" (Melville 608).

Where it was "eternity" that changed Poe into a voice in which death triumphed, it is the sea that makes Melville a spokesman for death, the sea that Crane calls in "Voyages II" "this great wink of eternity" (25). Crane says of the drowned men, "Their numbers as he watched / Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured"—"numbers" in the sense of countless deaths, of the numbers on the dice of their bones evoking the chanciness of life at sea, but also in the sense of that old word for metrical poetry, a countable beat, for Crane considered Melville a poet in both prose and verse. In a letter to Harriet Monroe, published in the October 1926 issue of *Poetry,* Crane explicated parts of the poem to illustrate the workings of the logic of metaphor. He noted that the dice, the "little cubes" ground from "the bones of drowned men by the action of the sea," were "finally thrown up on the sand," with the dice "having 'numbers' but no identification" (168).

The poem's second stanza initiates a series of allusions to images and structures in Melville's work: "And wrecks passed without sound of bells, / The calyx of death's bounty giving back / A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph, / The portent wound in corridors of shells" (24). Crane had further explained in his letter to Monroe that the "calyx" had a double meaning: "a cornucopia and the vortex made by a sinking ship." He continued, "As soon as the water has closed over a ship, this whirlpool sends up broken spars, wreckage, etc., which can be alluded to as livid *hieroglyphs,* making a *scattered chapter* so far as any complete record of the recent ship and her crew

is concerned" (168–69). But the "livid hieroglyph" also recalls the importance of the imagery of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing and of pictographic signs in *Moby-Dick,* a topic I dealt with in my book *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (1980). Ishmael's dark double Queequeg is literally a living hieroglyph; his "tattooing" was "the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read" (285). Queequeg reproduces the hieroglyphic marks on his body in the carvings on the lid of his coffin, the coffin that bobs to the surface when the Pequod sinks and that serves as a life-buoy for Ishmael. Melville also evokes the whale in terms of hieroglyphic imagery, describing the markings on the sperm whale's sides as "hieroglyphical; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present connexion," and he adds, "the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable" (Irwin, *Hieroglyphics* 285). The novel's central hieroglyphs are Moby Dick, with his "pyramidical white hump" and his mystic-marked brow, and his human counterpart Ahab, who is described as being like a "pyramid," as having an "Egyptian chest," and whose brow bears marks like the hieroglyphic markings on the sperm whale (285–86).

But Crane's use of the word *livid* to modify *hieroglyph* also directs our attention to a specific marking that the adjective describes in the novel, the scar on the side of Ahab's face and neck, "a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish" that Melville later calls his "livid brand," the trace left from his first disastrous encounter with Moby Dick, with Crane playing on two meanings of *livid* in Ahab's case—pallid and enraged (Melville 169). Just as the narrator Ishmael has a dark double in Queequeg, so Ahab has one in the Parsee, Fedallah—the relation between the latter two being evoked as that of a body and its shadow image: Ishmael describes the two as "fixedly gazing upon each other; as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow, in Ahab the Parsee his abandoned substance," and he adds, "Ahab seemed an independent lord; the Parsee but his slave. Still again both seemed yoked together, and an unseen tyrant driving them; the lean shade siding the solid rib" (676).

This shadow doubling is all under the structural aegis of narcissism: in the novel's opening chapter Ishmael notes that since, "as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever," the Persians thought "the sea holy" and the Greeks assigned it "a separate deity," both of which speak to the "deeper meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life" (Melville 25–26). As Melville evokes Narcissus's end as suicidal, so Ishmael tells us at the beginning of the same chapter, "whenever it is a damp, drizzly November

in my soul . . . whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, . . . then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship" (23). If it is the ungraspable phantom of life that causes Narcissus to plunge into the water that reflects his image, then it is the ungraspability, the indecipherability of the novel's numerous hieroglyphic-like objects that presents their deeper significance as being the essential indeterminateness of meaning, an indeterminateness born of meaning's endless overdetermination in an interpretive process where each observer projects the image of himself, shadowlike, upon the object. This process is explicitly evoked in the chapter called "The Doubloon," where various members of the crew each give different interpretations (springing from their differing personalities) of the symbols and inscriptions on the doubloon nailed to the mast, and the multiple perspectivism of this process, which dissolves the notion of objective knowledge, is introduced with a cosmic image of unmeaning: "some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston, to fill up some morass in the Milky Way" (549).

When one considers the number of structures Crane found in *Moby-Dick* that possessed a special appeal for his personality—doubling, shadow images, the suicidal component in narcissism, the linking of death and the sea—it is no surprise that by June 1926 he had read the novel three times (Crane 465). But there is still more that Crane found in Melville, evoked by the image preceding the "livid hieroglyph": "The calyx of death's bounty giving back / A scattered chapter." "At Melville's Tomb" immediately follows Part III of "Faustus and Helena," a proximity designed, I would argue, to make the reader notice the connection between "A scattered chapter" and Part III's "the new and scattered wine," a connection underlined by the way that the "blown blood and vine" image that precedes the "scattered wine" in Part III resonates in the "calyx" image of "At Melville's Tomb." The root of the word *calyx,* the outer whorl of a flower, is the Greek *kalyx,* meaning "a drinking cup or chalice." The connotation of a chalice holding the consecrated wine transubstantiated into the blood of a god sends us back to the image of the Dutch priest Desiderius Erasmus and the martyred bishop St. Erasmus handling the cup of wine become blood at Mass and to the implied image of the ancient Greek dying-and-reviving god's wine reemerging from the image of the Christian dying-and-reviving god's blood, a reemergence evoked in Crane's injunction to "delve upward for the new and scattered wine," with that last image connoting the characteristic dismemberment and scattering of Dionysus's body. But what do Melville and *Moby-Dick* have to do with this scenario?

As I pointed out in *American Hieroglyphics,* the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphics by Jean-François Champollion in the 1820s using the bilingual, tri-scriptural text of the Rosetta Stone focused Western interest on ancient Egypt and exercised a profound effect on the literature of the American Renaissance. The numerous references to things Egyptian

in Melville's mature work, and especially in *Moby-Dick,* are evidence of his interest in Egyptian imagery and mythology and in particular the myth of the Egyptian dying-and-reviving god Osiris, as H. Bruce Franklin established in his book *In the Wake of the Gods.* What seems clear is that Melville layered the story of Ahab's conflict with the White Whale on top of the myth of Osiris's conflict with his evil half-brother Typhon, a figure often represented in Egyptian mythology as a water monster or crocodile. What also seems clear is that, given Melville's interest in comparative mythology and religion, he understood the figures of Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ as being respectively the Egyptian, Greek, and Christian versions of a dying-and-reviving god. Thus, in Melville's long poem *Clarel* (1876), Rolfe, Clarel, and Vine note the similarities between Osiris and Christ:

> Rolfe, in tone
> Half elegiac, thus went on:
> "Phylae, upon thy sacred ground
> Osiris' broken tomb is found:
> A god how good, whose good proved vain—
> In strife with bullying Python slain.
> For long the ritual chant or moan
> Of pilgrims by that mystic stone
> Went up, even much as now ascend
> The liturgies of yearning prayer
> To one who met a kindred end—
> Christ, tombed in turn, and worshipped *there*,"
> And pointed.—"Hint you," here asked Vine,
> "In Christ Osiris met decline
> Anew?"—"Nay, nay; and yet past doubt
> Strange is that text St. Matthew won
> From gray Hosea in sentence: *Out*
> *Of Egypt have I called my son.*"
> Here Clarel spake, and with a stir
> Not all assured in eager plight:
> "But does not Matthew there refer
> Only to the return from flight,
> Flight into Egypt?"—"May be so,"
> Said Rolfe, "but then Hosea?—Nay,
> We'll let it pass."—And fell delay
> Of talk; they mused. (quoted in Irwin, *Hieroglyphics* 293–94)

If Melville suggests here that Osiris and Christ are two versions of the same archetype, then in *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* Melville uses the scenario of a con man (who assumes different disguises to play upon and undermine people's trust) to suggest the notion of a deity who in assuming different avatars does the same, a scenario that culminates in a discussion between the presumed con men Frank Goodman and Charlie Noble about two meanings of the same word, *press.* Frank, who takes the word to mean "journalism," launches into a panegyric to the press as an

"Advancer of Knowledge," the "defender of the faith in the final triumph of truth over error, metaphysics over superstition, theory over falsehood, machinery over nature, and the good man over the bad" (*Hieroglyphics* 338). In associating the press with knowledge and enlightenment, Frank naturally associates it with the sun god, concluding that the "god Apollo dispenses the day" (Irwin, *Hieroglyphics* 338). But Charlie Noble takes the word to mean "a wine press" from "which cometh inspiration, . . . from which flow streams of knowledge which give man a bliss no more unreal than his pain," and he introduces his paean to wine with a quote from Leigh Hunt's "Bacchus in Tuscany: A Dithyrambic Poem, Translated from the Italian of Francesco Redi." The two meanings of the word *press* evoke the link between the deities associated with each: on the one hand, the printed word and knowledge as enlightenment (the sun god Apollo) and, on the other, wine and visionary intoxication (Bacchus, i.e., Dionysus). Since Apollo is also associated with the lyre, Frank suggests the reciprocity of the two gods when he praises Charlie's paean as being "quite in the lyric style—a style I always admire on account of that spirit of Sibyllic confidence and assurance which is, perhaps, its prime ingredient." Charlie replies, "The lyre and the vine forever! . . . the vine, the vine! is it not the most graceful and bounteous of all growths? And, by its being such, is not something meant—divinely meant? As I live, a vine, a Catawba vine, shall be planted on my grave!" (*Hieroglyphics* 339).

As dying-and-reviving gods, Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ are each associated with a *sparagmos* or dismemberment, the first two literally and the third symbolically. According to Plutarch, Typhon tricked Osiris into lying down in a chest whose lid was slammed and nailed shut, and the chest was then thrown into a river and carried out to sea. The Egyptian chest then floated to the land of Byblus, where it was finally discovered by Osiris's sister Isis and brought by ship to Buto where Isis hid it, "but Typhon, who was hunting by night in the light of the moon, happened upon it. Recognizing the body he divided it into fourteen parts and scattered them, each in a different place" (*Hieroglyphics* 298). Isis searched for and regathered the parts of Osiris's body except "the male member," which could not be found, so "Isis made a replica of the member to takes its place, and consecrated the phallus, in honour of which the Egyptians even at the present day celebrate a festival" (*Hieroglyphics* 298). The phallic element in the Osiris myth likely accounts for the importance of phallic imagery in *Moby-Dick,* imagery that culminates in "The Cassock" chapter, a meditation on the sperm whale's penis, described as "that unaccountable cone," an "idol, indeed, it is; or, rather, in old times, its likeness was," the "grandissimus, as the mariners call it" (Melville 536). The fact that the dismembered Osiris's penis could not be found and "a replica of the member" was made to take its place probably accounts as well for the fact that when Ahab's leg is taken off by Moby Dick, who is described as his "dismemberer" (*Hieroglyphics* 301), the missing leg is replaced by a "white leg" made from "the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (Melville 169). Melville adds that "though unlimbed of a leg . . . vital strength yet lurked" in Ahab's "Egyptian chest" (*Hieroglyph-*

ics 301). The "Egyptian chest" is likely an allusion to the chest in which Typhon sealed Osiris and then cast into the river that bore it to the sea, an image underlying Queequeg's coffin (a chest meant to contain a dead body) that buoys up Ishmael's living body at the novel's end.

As Osiris was dismembered by Typhon and the infant Dionysus dismembered by the Titans, so Jesus was symbolically dismembered at the Last Supper, the bread that had been transformed into his body being broken into pieces and given to his disciples to eat. The Dionysian ritual in which a living victim was dismembered had also involved this eating of the victim's flesh by the participants, a ritual recalling the dismemberment of Orpheus by the Bacchantes "in the midst of their sacred rites and the midnight orgies of Bacchus," as Virgil says, and their casting his severed head into the River Hebrus to float, singing, down to the sea and the island of Lesbos. All of which brings us back to the image of "A scattered chapter" and its relation to the image of "the new and scattered wine" in the preceding poem. If the scattered wine evokes the dismemberment and scattering of the wine god's body, then the scattered chapter image not only points to the dismemberment and scattering of Osiris's body by Typhon but also to a further dispersal.

Plutarch records that Typhon "tears to pieces and scatters to the winds the sacred writings, which the goddess [Isis] collects and puts together and gives into the keeping of those who are initiated into the holy rites" and "who within their own soul, as though within a casket, bear the sacred writings about the gods" (*Hieroglyphics* 303). One of *Moby-Dick*'s most interesting sections, "The Lee Shore," evokes the part/whole relationship of a chapter to its book as that of a "head or a heading" (the word *chapter* ultimately derives from the Latin *caput,* "head") to the "body" of the text, the sort of part-for-whole relationship that exists between the phallus and the body of Osiris. Melville proposes that "The Lee Shore" will have that same kind of relationship to a sailor named Bulkington, who had just returned from a four-year voyage and immediately shipped out again on the Pequod. Ishmael says of him, "The land seemed scorching to his feet" (Melville 148) (a detail perhaps echoed by the words of the old sailor in "Cutty Sark": "A whaler once . . . No—I can't live on land" [52]). Ishmael makes Bulkington a personification of "that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea, . . . shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!" (Melville 149). Bulkington, like everyone else on the Pequod except Ishmael, is lost with the sinking of the ship, but Ishmael says that though "deep memories yield no epitaphs; this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington" (148), the phallus-like, six-inch chapter surviving the loss of the body and signifying a renewed godlike vitality/immortality in the chapter's final image: "Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing—straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!" (149).

The last line of "At Melville's Tomb"'s second stanza, "Portents wound in corridors of shells," evokes the countless prefigurations in *Moby-Dick* of

the Pequod's disastrous end, as if the sea-like sound of one's pulse heard in holding a shell to one's ear were the sound of the sea closing over the heads of the drowned. That these portents are described as "wound" evokes the novel's pervasive imagery of circles and circling that culminates in the final vortex: "concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew" and "carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight" (Melville 722). Ishmael, who was thrown from his boat early in that third day's chase of Moby Dick, "was then, but slowly, drawn to that closing vortex . . . Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle . . . Till . . . the black bubble upward burst; and now . . . rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side" (724). And this final vortex is part of what Crane refers to in stanza 3 as well: "Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil, / Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled, / Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars; / And silent answers crept across the stars" (24). But the "coil" image also alludes to Ahab's end as he harpoons Moby Dick and the line fouls: "the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat ere the crew knew he was gone" (Melville 721–22). As to Crane's "charmed" lashings, Melville describes the strange emotions felt by a man "who for the first time finds himself pulling into the charmed, churned circle of the hunted sperm whale" (Melville 299), and when Moby Dick smashes into the Pequod, Melville says that "Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect" (720), a malice presumably "reconciled" when the whale destroys his tormentors. The "frosted eyes" are likely those of the survivor Ishmael who drifts for a day and a night before being picked up by another ship, and the altar, a raised table or platform, connoting the general notion of sacrifice, prayer, and thus of eyes raised to a deity, as Crane told Harriet Monroe (168), probably evokes both the platform-like coffin life-buoy that raises Ishmael out of the water and the lifting of his "frosted eyes" to the heavens to see the constellation Ara (The Altar, one of the two constellations Crane invokes in "To Brooklyn Bridge" when he addresses the lighted bridge as "*O harp and altar, of the fury fused*"). And the notion that the "frosted eyes" are lifting up, or being lifted up to, the constellation Ara fits in with Crane's next line: "And silent answers crept across the stars." For the "silent answers" in the stars would be the constellations Cetus (The Whale) and Argo Navis (The Ship Argo) (both of which Crane alludes to in *The Bridge*), so that the "answer" Ishmael would have found was that the collision of whale and ship was written in the stars, was fated.

In his letter to Harriet Monroe, Crane explicates the opening lines of the poem's final stanza ("Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive / No farther tides"), asking "Hasn't it often occurred that instruments originally invented for record and computation have inadvertently so extended the concepts of the entity they were invented to measure (concepts of space, etc.) in the mind and imagination that employed them, that they may metaphorically be said to have extended the original boundaries of the entity

measured" (169). One immediately recognizes here Crane's notion from "General Aims and Theories" of a poem giving the reader "a single, new *word,* . . . self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward" (163), and the new instrument of consciousness that Crane believed his poems gave the reader was the logic of metaphor, "the dynamics of inferential mention." This new-instrument image harks back to Pater's praise of Winckelmann for initiating "in the sphere of art, . . . a new organ for the human spirit" (*Renaissance* 141).

But if the image of "Compass, quadrant and sextant" contriving "no farther tides" (times) was meant to suggest the way instruments for recording an entity had extended the future understanding of that entity, then Crane knew that any reader of *Moby-Dick* would have understood the irony here. In the chapter called "The Quadrant," Ahab dashes the quadrant to the deck and tramples on it because though the instrument "tellest me truly where I *am,*" it can't "cast the least hint where I *shall* be" or "where some other thing besides me is this moment living" (Melville 633). He says of the quadrant, "no longer will I guide my earthly way by thee; the ship's level compass, and the level dead-reckoning, by log and line; *these* shall conduct me" (634). But later, in the chapter called "The Needle," Ahab discovers that the ship's compasses have been reversed as the result of the Pequod's passing through a thunderstorm and that they no longer point to magnetic north. All of which suggests that it is not the instruments of human navigation that lead Ahab to Moby Dick, but fate. The godless, godlike Ahab's destruction of the quadrant and the reversal of the Pequod's compasses recalls by contrast the moment in "Ave Maria" when Columbus, between two worlds (the old one of religious faith and the new one of scientific exploration), finds himself still able to see God in the concentric circles of the universe and exclaims, "Of all that amplitude that time explores, / A needle in the sight, suspended north,— / Yielding by inference and discard, faith / And true appointment from the hidden shoal" (37).

Of course, the compass-quadrant-sextant image as contriving "no farther tides" figures Melville's death as the end of his mental voyaging into unexplored regions: "High in the azure steeps / Monody shall not wake the mariner. / This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps" (24). As *Moby-Dick*'s hieroglyphic-like objects and the multiple perspectivism involved in their interpretation dissolve the notion of an objective ground of knowledge, so they also dissolve the notion of a God who guarantees the ultimate meaningfulness of the universe, revealing the final sense of Ishmael's remark that "some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher" (549). In speaking of the deceased Melville, Crane makes clear that he, like Melville, holds no illusions about a personal God and the immortality of the soul, for if monody (an ode sung by one voice or an elegy performed by one person) evokes the notion of individuality, then the fact that monody (with the implied transference of the notion of singleness from subject to object) will not wake the mariner denies, in effect, the notion of individual survival. The only survival Crane predicts for Melville is that of a "fabulous shadow" that

"only the sea keeps"—the shadow image of himself created by black ink on white paper in his fables of the sea. This notion of a shadow held by the ever-moving surface of the sea evokes the image of Narcissus and the self-destructive component in meditative "water-gazing," which, in turn, recalls the moment near the end of the novel when Ahab sees "how his shadow in the water sank and sank to his gaze, the more and the more that he strove to pierce the profundity" (*Hieroglyphics* 289).

"Voyages," the twenty-third and final poem in *White Buildings,* is composed of six sections written between October 1921 and April 1926, with parts of the poem first published in January 1923 and spring 1926. "Voyages I" had originally been written as a separate poem titled "The Bottom of the Sea Is Cruel," and it was only in 1924, at the start of what proved to be the most intense sexual relationship of Crane's life, his love affair with the young Norwegian-American merchant seaman Emil Opfer Jr., that he wrote "Voyages II" and incorporated the early poem as the initial section of the sequence. Since "Voyages" is built around an extended metaphor in which the tenor is love and the vehicles are the sea and voyaging, it is not surprising that the poem immediately follows "At Melville's Tomb," particularly since some of the imagery in "Voyages" is borrowed from *Moby-Dick.* "Voyages I" begins with the speaker observing children playing on the seashore. The shore is equated with childhood, and the sea with the maturity that comes from sexual experience. To the sound of children shouting during their games, the sea provides an ominous counterpoint: "in answer to their treble interjections / The sun beats lightning on the waves, / The waves fold thunder on the sand" (24). The thunder and lightning suggest the dangers of the sea, but the sun's movement and the beating of the waves on the shore evoke a subtler danger to childhood—the passage of time that will inevitably bring the children to a dangerous knowledge. Though Melville is clearly a presence in "Voyages," one should not discount the influence here of Whitman as well and of his great seashore poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." Watching the children, Crane's speaker says:

> could they hear me I would tell them:
> "O brilliant kids, frisk with your dog,
> Fondle your shells and sticks, bleached
> By time and the elements; but there is a line
> You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it
> Spry cordage of your bodies to caresses
> Too lichen-faithful from too wide a breast.
> The bottom of the sea is cruel." (24–25)

As the adult observer here watches the children playing on the seashore, so the adult speaker in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" recalls a childhood scene by the sea when as a boy he watched a bird singing for its lost mate: "The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing, / I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair, / Listen'd long and long" (Whitman 181). And the bird's song, interpreted by the adult, says, "*Low hangs the moon, it rose late, / It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with*

love. // O madly the sea pushes upon the land, / With love, with love" (Whitman 182). When it becomes clear that the missing mate will never return, the love song shifts to the past tense: "*Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved! / But my mate no more, no more with me! / We two together no more*" (183). The bird's song is heard against the ceaseless noise of the sea, "the fierce old mother incessantly moaning" (183). And the adult poet realizes that there is a "colloquy there" among the bird, the boy, and the sea: with "the savage old mother incessantly crying" as he asks the bird, "Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? Or is it really to me? / For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you, / Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake, / And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours, / A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die" (Whitman 183).

Addressing the bird as "you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me," Whitman vows that "the cries of unsatisfied love" will never more "be absent from me," for "the messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within, / The unknown want, the destiny of me," and he asks the sea, "O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,) / O if I am to have so much, let me have more!" (Whitman 184). The sea replies with "the low and delicious word death / And again death, death, death, death." Whitman concludes, "My own songs awaked from that hour, / And with them the key, the word up from the waves, / The word of the sweetest song and of all songs, / That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet, / (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,) / The sea whisper'd me" (Whitman 184). The bird's desire to be reunited with its dead mate will only be consummated in death, that "word final, superior to all" evoking the absolute consummation of love as a *Liebestod.* A similar linking of love and death is at work in "Voyages I," where the speaker, on the literal level, warns the children playing on the shore that they are not old enough or strong enough to trust their bodies to the sea, that death would await them and, on the figurative level, that they are not old enough to launch themselves on the sea of love, to experience that "oceanic feeling" whose rising and falling tides of emotion and sexual passion can be cruel, threatening perhaps the death of the heart. One might also note that Crane foreshadows the type of sexual love which "Voyages" celebrates in his injunction to the urchins on the beach to "Fondle your shells and sticks," an image critics have often read as a veiled evocation of male genitalia, a reading reinforced by the phallic imagery that pervades "Voyages."

Having warned the children about the dangers of the sea of love in the poem's opening section, Crane presents the opposite view in "Voyages II"—the case for risking everything for love. Thus, the second section begins with a qualifying "—And yet" that introduces the sea as "this great wink of eternity" and evokes it as a body unavoidably attracted by its lover, the moon: "Her undinal vast belly moonward bends." The adjective *undinal* (from *undine,* derived from the Latin *unda,* "wave"), means "of or pertaining to a water nymph," an elemental being in Paracelsian lore and the

subject of the 1811 German novel *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué about a water sprite who marries a human to gain a soul. In evoking the attraction between the moon and the sea as a love affair, Crane sets up an analogy between the rising and falling tides caused by this attraction and the human lovers' rising and falling tides of passion such that the sea can be described as sympathetically "Laughing the wrapped inflections of our love." An *inflection* is a change, connoting more specifically here a change in the pitch or tone of a voice or a change in the form of a word to indicate gender, number, case, and so on. Crane takes up the former meaning (a change of sound) in the next stanza, while the latter meaning points forward to the culmination of the voyage in section 6, the arrival at Belle Isle and "The imaged Word," an uninflected or changeless word: "It is the unbetrayable reply / Whose accent no farewell can know" (29).

The next stanza begins with a typical Cranian imperative: "Take this Sea, whose diapason knells / On scrolls of silver snowy sentences" (25). *Diapason,* which, among other things, can mean either "a burst of sound" or "the entire compass of musical tones," in being coupled with *knells,* evokes a swelling totality of sound that marks the end of something, and further, of sound transformed into writing as "snowy sentences." Crane borrowed the phrase "scrolls of silver" from "The Spirit-Spout" chapter of *Moby-Dick,* where Melville describes the sea on a moonlit night "when all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver; and, by their soft, suffusing seethings, made what seemed a silvery silence" (309). If the waves are "scrolls of silver," then the "snowy sentences" are the moonlit foam on the waves' crests. But then with a sudden turn on the word *sentence,* as a judgment pronounced by a court or judge, Crane says of the sea, "The sceptered terror of whose sessions rends / As her demeanors motion well or ill / All but the pieties of lovers' hands." The judicial meaning of *sessions* ("a series of meetings of an English court," and hence "sceptered terror" as an image of royal authority) plays off the legal meaning of *sentence* and evokes the sea as passing judgment on the lovers. If in stanza 1 the speaker had fantasized a moonstruck sympathy of the sea for the lovers, in stanza 2 he realizes that the sea may, as the mood strikes it, judge well or ill of them and pronounce either a snowy sentence or a death knell, depending on the depth of their passion and their faithfulness. But he affirms that this will not separate the lovers, not part their clasped hands.

With stanza 3 Crane gives the scenario of the lovers' symbolic sea voyage a local habitation and a name: "And onward, as bells off San Salvador / Salute the crocus lustres of the stars, / In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—" (25). In Crane's day, San Salvador island in the Bahamas was believed to be the first landfall in the New World that Columbus sighted on his initial voyage and on which he landed on October 12, 1492, naming it for the "Holy Savior." Crane's setting the poem in this locale marks the lovers' journey as a voyage of discovery, of each other and of the nature of love, and this evocation of Columbus's journey is another example of the way Crane used the longer, multipart poems in *White Buildings* to try out structures he would incorporate in *The Bridge,* where Columbus's discovery

of the physical New World becomes a figure for the quester's symbolic journey to discover that spiritual New World Whitman named the Open Road.

That the sea's reflected stars and its tides are each evoked in terms of a flower (a crocus and a poinsettia, respectively) points toward the climactic flower image at the end of stanza 4. (We should note in passing that the poinsettia, a perennial plant native to Mexico and Central America, further establishes the Caribbean locale and that, in terms of the motif of discovery initiated by the name "San Salvador," the poinsettia is named for "J. R. Poinsett, 1779–1851, U.S. minister to Mexico, who discovered the plant there in 1828" [*American College* 935].) Stanza 3 concludes, "Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal, / Complete the dark confessions her veins spell" (25). In his essay "General Aims and Theories," Crane says of the phrase "adagios of islands" that "the reference is to the motion of a boat through islands clustered thickly, the rhythm of the motion, etc." (Crane 163). While that might be one literal reference of the image, its figurative sense is that the lovers are two separate bodies, like islands in the sea (perhaps with an echo of the term *isolato,* which Melville used to denote the essential separateness of individuals), bodies that can only come together through a water journey, or sexually, through the passage of fluid from one body to another. Moreover since an adagio is a slow piece of, or movement in, music that often accompanies a pas de deux, the word evokes the two lovers' bodies moving in a dance-like rhythm. The "Prodigal" referred to is likely both the sea and the lover: for the sea is prodigal in casting its riches lavishly on the shore (thus the wealth of the Spanish Main is evoked in stanzas 4 and 5), though the greatest of the sea's treasures is love. But the lover is also invoked as prodigal, like the son in the biblical parable who leaves home and squanders his inheritance, only to return penniless and defeated to be received again by the father who loves him. As a merchant seaman, Emil Opfer Jr. often left Crane for long periods at sea, likely raising doubts in Crane's mind about whether his absent lover had lavished his affections and favors on others—an imagined betrayal that is perhaps the referent of the "dark confessions" completed by the sea's "veins," its currents or tides, its tendencies.

In stanza 4 the movement of the sea, figured as the movement of a human body, marks the passage of time and immediately gives way to a carpe diem exhortation to the lovers to enjoy their moment of union while it lasts: "Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours, / And hasten while her penniless rich palms / Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,— / Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire, / Close round one instant in one floating flower" (25). Crane plays on two meanings of the word *palms,* evoking, on the one hand, the richness of the Caribbean Sea, the lushness of its vegetation symbolized by palm trees, its tropic heat suggestive of sexual passion, and, on the other, the palms of the lovers' hands that, as the line in stanza 2 says, cannot be parted by any sentence the sea renders. In locating the penniless rich palms of the lovers' hands in a region known

for the wealth of gold and jewels that passed through it from Mexico and Central America to Spain, Crane emphasizes by contrast that the lovers are rich not materially but in the things of the spirit. In another image like that of "adagios of islands" where the movement of a craft through the water was transferred to the seeming movement of the islands through which the craft navigated, the palm trees "pass" the "superscription of bent foam and waves," the foam being figured as a kind of writing superinscribed on the waves' crests and harking back to that image in stanza 2 of the sea's judgment inscribing "On scrolls of silver snowy sentences." Repeating his exhortation to seize the moment of lovers' communion while they are still true to each other or while love is still a truth in their lives, the speaker invokes a triad—"sleep, death, desire"—suggestive of a sexual climax: the "little death" of orgasm, postcoital sleep, the body spent, desire satisfied and exhausted—a grouping reminiscent of the ending of Whitman's "The Sleepers," with its concatenation of sleep, night, death, the mother, the sea.

That Crane says "sleep, death, desire, / Close round one instant in one floating flower" sends us back to the second stanza of "At Melville's Tomb," where the vortex carrying down the wreck of the Pequod is evoked as the outermost whorl of a flower: "The calyx of death's bounty." And this image of a floating flower/vortex prepares for the poem's final stanza: "Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe. / O minstrel galleons of Carib fire, / Bequeath us to no earthly shore until / Is answered in the vortex of our grave / The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise" (25). In requesting the "Seasons," as the markers of time's passage, to "Bind us in time . . . and awe," the speaker echoes a sentiment we recognize from the ending of "Faustus and Helen" ("Distinctly praise the years") and "Recitative" ("let us walk through time with equal pride")—an appreciation on Crane's part, in spite of his concentration on the realm of the ideal and eternal, of the fleeting temporal world, with a consequent acceptance of the mortality that it entails. The heat of the tropic sun is figured as "Carib fire," and the seasons that carry us through time are imaged as *galleons,* a word playing on the earlier motif of the riches of the Spanish Main. But this is a galleon of minstrelsy, bearing not wealth but song, and it is exhorted to transport us to no earthly shore but to the vortex of the grave where will be answered "The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise." The gaze toward paradise recalls the gaze that ends Part I of "Faustus and Helen," where the speaker asks Helen to "Accept a lone eye riveted to your plane" of ideal beauty, but the gaze in "Voyages II" seems directed to the plane of ideal love, embodied not in the figure of Helen but of Venus, the "lounged goddess" of Belle Isle, "Voyages"'s ultimate goal. The gaze here belongs to a seal, a warm-blooded creature who lives on both land and sea and whose elongated, phallus-like shape evokes the fact that life originally emerged from (and the goddess of love was born from) the sea into which Cronus had cast his father's member. This latter connotation is further reinforced by the word *spindrift,* which Crane found in Melville, a word meaning "a

continuous driving spray," as when the wind blows the foam from the tops of waves, a possible allusion to Aphrodite's being "foam-born" and to foam as the father's semen.

There is also the possibility that Crane may have been led to the word *spindrift* as a kind of thought-rhyme. Recall that in stanza 3 the speaker addresses the sea and the lover as "O Prodigal." One of the synonyms for *prodigal* is *spendthrift,* and since one of the recurring images in *White Buildings* is the total spending of the self for love and beauty (as when Crane says, in "Legend," "This cleaving and this burning" is to be learned "only by the one who / Spends out himself again" [3] or, in "Faustus and Helen," "The substance drilled and spent beyond repair / For golden, or the shadow of gold hair" [23]), then the notion of spending or being spent (in both a monetary and a sexual sense) matches the balance between images of material wealth and the spiritual wealth of love that Crane sets up in locating the lovers' journey among the "penniless rich palms" of the Spanish Main. If "spindrift" recalls by echoic association the prodigal nature of their love, then sea foam blown by the wind would be an ideal embodiment of such spendthrift passion.

"Voyages III" continues the imagery of the sea's sympathy for the lovers, figured in this instance as arising from the sea's "infinite consanguinity," its being of the same blood as the lovers because it is the source from which all life originally sprang. The consanguinity is exhibited as "This tendered theme of you that light / Retrieves from sea plains where the sky / Resigns a breast that every wave enthrones" (26). The "you" addressed here is the speaker's lover, and the image of the sky lying over the sea like one lover's body above another reprises the structure from stanza 1 of "Voyages II," except that there the moon lies above the sea and its tide-attracting power causes the sea's "undinal vast belly" to bend "moonward," while in "Voyages III" the impending sky's "breast" is lifted, "enthroned," by the sea's waves. This structure is reprised yet again in "The Dance" section of *The Bridge* as a sacred marriage of sky and earth rather than of sky and sea, as here. Given that "Voyages VI" culminates with the speaker reaching his goal of Belle Isle, where individual human love is seen as leading to the idealized, eternal figure of "the lounged goddess" of love, we should note that in Hesiod's *Theogony* the passage that describes the birth of Venus from sea foam begins with the image of Heaven lying above Earth at night, covering her "on every side," as Hesiod says, in a sexual union like the cosmic mating in "Voyages."

The imagery of the speaker making his way, either in a boat or by swimming, toward his lover, who is evoked either as an isolated floating body (an island) or another body swimming in the sea of love continues in the first stanza: "While ribboned water lanes I wind / Are laved and scattered with no stroke / Wide from your side, whereto this hour / The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands" (26). If the partners' lovemaking is being connoted here in words such as *laved, scattered* (with a Dionysian resonance of "sexually spent"), *stroke,* and *side,* then the image of the sea lifting "reliquary hands" suggests that the sea's liquid preserves by analogy the seminal liquid of the

lovers' deaths as if they were the sacred relics of dead saints. And these "little deaths" on the sea of passion, assimilated to the actual deaths of lovers by drowning, would send us back to the figure of Glaucus in Keats's *Endymion,* for Glaucus, the shepherd who must take "all lovers" drowned in the sea and "deposit them side by side" in the cavern with his drowned love Scylla, could be certainly said to lift the lovers in "reliquary hands."

The second stanza imagines the speaker's sea journey as leading into another realm where death can mean the little death of orgasm, the death of love from a satiation of desire, or literal death: "And so, admitted through black swollen gates / That must arrest all distance otherwise,— / Past whirling pillars and lithe pediments, / Light wrestling there incessantly with light, / Star kissing star through wave on wave unto / Your body rocking!" (26). We recognize the first line's "gate" as a recurring Cranian image for a liminal or threshold experience, involving either physical penetration or an entry into a different zone of consciousness. But the description in "Voyages III" of the gates as "black" and "swollen" would seem to point to the special relevance of two of Crane's "gate" references from sections of *The Bridge.* If *black* as applied to this image suggests an entrance to the grave or the underworld, then the "Quaker Hill" passage in which Crane says we must "descend as worms' eye to construe / Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate" (65) would reinforce such a reading.

On the other hand, the adjective *swollen* would suggest an entrance into a living body, a reading substantiated by the sexual innuendo of the gate image as it appears in "The Tunnel." In a fragment of conversation overheard by the quester during his subway ride, a young woman expresses her disenchantment with a young man with whom she has been involved: "if / you don't like my gate why did you / swing on it, why *didja* / swing on it / anyhow"—a sexual undertone emphasized by the next fragment the quester overhears: "But I want service in this office SERVICE / I said— after the show she cried a little afterwards but—" (68–69). Part of the effectiveness of the line "if / you don't like my gate why did you / swing on it" is that it takes a nineteenth-century, Tom Sawyerish image of a young man expressing his affection for a young girl by swinging back and forth on her front gate and turns it into a twentieth-century double entendre. In the next line this implicit image of penetration gives rise to that of a passage between "whirling pillars and lithe pediments" as if it were a sea journey through the Pillars of Hercules (the ancient Straits of Gibraltar) or at the other end of the Mediterranean, through the Bosporus Strait, the site of the mythical Symplegades or Clashing Rocks that Jason and the Argo passed through on the way to the golden fleece, as we noted earlier. One can further imagine that Crane's image was meant to connote these "pillars" as the beloved's legs and that he took the root of the word *pediment* to be the Latin *ped-, pes* "foot," with the adjective *lithe* (denoting flexibility or grace) being a word that normally describes a human body and thus resonating back to the dance imagery of "adagios of islands." The image of light "wrestling" with light in the next line is a figurative displacement onto nature of the lovers' bodies wrestling in lovemaking, a displacement

that continues in the image of "Star kissing star" as the stars reflected in the sea have their images thrown against one another by the movement of the waves, until the sense of all the connotations and displacements of the previous lines is made explicit in the phrase "unto / Your body rocking!" (26).

The speaker and the beloved have reached a realm "where death, if shed, / Presumes no carnage, but this single change,— / Upon the steep floor from dawn to dawn / The silken, skilled transmemberment of song; // *Permit me* voyage, love, into your hands" (26, italics mine). Death, in all of its various senses in "Voyages III," has been shed or surpassed in this realm through no physical slaughter but a transformation of flesh into Word, the Logos of love. Of course, the conjunction of the images of death and of shedding would seem to have particular relevance to ejaculation. The fact that this "single change" is described as a "transmemberment" into song recalls Whitman's repeated references to his poems as phallic objects, as linking third terms between writer and reader, and to the act of creating his songs as analogous to procreation. Thus, in "From Pent-Up Aching Rivers," Whitman speaks of "my own voice resonant, singing the phallus" (Whitman 69), while in "Spontaneous Me" he celebrates

> This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and that all
> men carry,
> (Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me,
> are our lusty lurking masculine poems,)
> Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-climbers, and
> the climbing sap,
> Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love . . . (Whitman 78)

And in "Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals," he presents himself as

> Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,
> Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly sweet,
> I, chanter of Adamic songs,
> Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,
> Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these, offering myself,
> Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,
> Offspring of my loins. (Whitman 80–81)

In describing the change from the lovers' actual coupling to its permanent evocation in poetic song as a "transmemberment," Crane suggests the change as being similar to the movement from the actual male member (the penis) to its symbolic substitute (the phallus), from life to art. Since, as we saw earlier, the phallus as an ancient cult object was an integral part of the myths of dismemberment of dying and reviving gods like Osiris and Dionysus, the notion of a Dionysian "scattering" may lurk within the image of sexual death as a kind of "shedding." The last line of "Voyages III," besides asking the beloved to receive the speaker's body into his keeping, can also be seen as a request that the poem as phallic object, the inseminating mental Word that links the poet and his audience, be received by the reader in a manner like the one Whitman envisions in "Whoever You Are

Holding Me Now in Hand." Whitman says that the reader who is holding his book in hand and just making his acquaintance, must read him "in the open air . . . Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or some quiet island / Here to put your lips upon mine I *permit* you" (86, italics mine). The setting at sea and the use of the word *permit* both suggest Whitman's poem as a source of Crane's image of holding the poet's hand by holding his book in hand. Crane explicitly alludes to this image of Whitman's in the closing lines of "Cape Hatteras": "no, never to let go / My hand / in yours, / Walt Whitman— / so—" (60). Since "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand" is one of Whitman's "Calamus" poems, a collection in which he says he is "Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment" (84), the presence of this image within the last line of "Voyages III" would be yet a further indication to Crane's readers of the type of love the poem celebrates.

§ 10
"Voyages IV, V, VI"

"Voyages IV," built around images of time's passage and of the lover's parting and return, begins with the speaker saying that he has counted the "hours and days" before the lover's homecoming, known time's passing through the "spectrum of the sea," that continuous range of changes in the sea's appearance that, like the changing seasons, exhibits time's movement. The speaker invokes this spectrum of changes as a token of the lover's eventual return, describing it as a "pledge / Vastly now parting gulf on gulf of wings / Whose circles bridge, I know, (from palms to the severe / Chilled albatross's white immutability)" (26). The "circles" may be the latitudes that the lover's ship bridges in returning from the land of palms (the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico) to the northern realm of the chilled albatross, or an evocation (almost in the manner of a Futurist painting) of the wheeling flight of seabirds, similar to the image in "To Brooklyn Bridge" where the "*seagull's wings . . . dip and pivot him, / Shedding white rings of tumult*" (33). In an exercise of imaginative etymology, Crane probably thought that the "alba" in "albatross" derived from the Latin *albus*, "white," and thus intended the "albatross's white immutability" to be read against the image of the "spectrum of the sea"—that "continuum of color when a beam of white light is dispersed (as by passage through a prism)." If this ever-changing spectrum is associated with time, the real world, and the actual absent lover, then the unchanging whiteness of the soaring bird suggests the ideal nature of the unbetrayable Word of love. But since this soaring bird is an albatross, with all its Coleridgean connotations of ill omen, one gets a sense of the speaker's uneasiness about the absent lover's faithfulness or the mutable quality of physical love. The speaker continues, "No greater stream of love advancing now / Than, singing, this mortality alone / Through clay aflow immortally to you." The very phrase "No greater stream of love advancing now" suggests the possibility that some

Holding Me Now in Hand." Whitman says that the reader who is holding his book in hand and just making his acquaintance, must read him "in the open air . . . Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or some quiet island / Here to put your lips upon mine I *permit* you" (86, italics mine). The setting at sea and the use of the word *permit* both suggest Whitman's poem as a source of Crane's image of holding the poet's hand by holding his book in hand. Crane explicitly alludes to this image of Whitman's in the closing lines of "Cape Hatteras": "no, never to let go / My hand / in yours, / Walt Whitman— / so—" (60). Since "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand" is one of Whitman's "Calamus" poems, a collection in which he says he is "Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment" (84), the presence of this image within the last line of "Voyages III" would be yet a further indication to Crane's readers of the type of love the poem celebrates.

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greater love on the part of either the speaker or the absent lover could appear and alter their relationship. But the mention of the "stream of love" also calls up the image of an ocean current bearing the lover's ship back to the speaker and its comparison to "singing" suggesting the mellifluousness, the honeyed flowing, of phallic song.

The second stanza imagines the lovers' coming reunion, the image of a sweet odor that is impossible to alter or mistake ("All fragrance irrefragable"), subtly introducing the flower imagery that will figure the reblossoming of their love on the other's return. Each reclaims the other, "Madly meeting logically in this hour / And region that is ours to wreathe again" (26). The entwining of the lovers' bodies, evoked here as if it were the plaiting of a flowery wreath, is imagined as adorning the place and hour of their meeting, recalling the sort of wreath that in ancient times was used to welcome home a loved one or that is still used in Hawaii to welcome a traveler. And this imagined wreathing "portends" the meeting and intermingling of the lovers' "eyes and lips," openings in the body described by the speaker as "The chancel port and portion of our June" (26). The sacredness of these portals is suggested by the word *chancel* (the part of a church containing the altar), and given that the word derives from the Latin *cancellus,* "lattice," and *cancelli,* "the latticework enclosing that portion of the church," one suspects that for Crane the phrase "chancel port" was meant to evoke the human eye, as in the image from "Lachrymae Christi" of Jesus's "eyes / And their undimming lattices of flame" (15).

The echoic linking of *port* and *portion* links the eye image associated with the former to the month of high spring time and full flowering (June), setting up the explicit flower references of the next stanza. Of course, the appropriateness of this linking is that the eye contains a flower—the iris, "the opaque contractile diaphragm perforated by the pupil," the flower of the eye that opens and closes, expands or contracts, with the changes of the light. The speaker continues, "Shall they not stem and close in our own steps / Bright staves of flowers and quills today as I / Must first be lost in fatal tides to tell?" (27), lines that hark back to the imagery that ends stanza 4 of "Voyages II": "sleep, death, desire, / Close round one instant in one floating flower" (25). This latter image suggests the connection between the closing of the eye's flower in the postcoital sleep (when physical desire has been exhausted) and the closing of the floating flower of death (the vortex that carries down the Pequod) evoked in "At Melville's Tomb" as a "calyx." The imagery of the flowers' "staves . . . and quills" continues the phallic connotations begun in "Voyages I" with the image of fondling "shells and sticks," and the linking of the eye's flower to this phallic imagery may well reflect Crane's awareness of the Freudian, as-above-so-below analogy between head and penis, eyeballs and testicles, in which the penetrating power of sight takes possession of the beloved's body before the actual penetration of coitus occurs.

Stanza 4 of the poem begins with the image of Paracelsian signatures and the incarnation of the Logos: "In signature of the incarnate word / The harbor shoulders to resign in mingling / Mutual blood" (27). Crane

would have been familiar with Parcelsus's concept of signatures from the Swedenborgian element in Emerson's work, the concept that all natural objects have imprinted on themselves visible signs indicating their inner significance or virtue and, in particular in ancient medicine, that natural objects such as plants bear signs indicating their specific medicinal usefulness. Having claimed in "Voyages III" that the sea shared the same blood as the lovers (its "Infinite consanguinity"), Crane in "Voyages IV" now suggests that New York harbor (where salt water from the Atlantic mingles with fresh water from the Hudson and East Rivers) is a sign of the returning lover (the word made flesh for the speaker), a "signature" of that "mingling" of "Mutual blood" which will occur through the lovers' exchange of fluids. It is this latter mingling that the harbor water (anthropomorphized by the word *shoulders*) is said to "re-sign." But we should also note the musical connotation of the word *signature* (a key or time signature written on a musical staff), particularly since in the previous stanza Crane employs the image of "Bright staves of flowers and quills," as if the notes on the musical staff of this love song were turning into flowers or feathers. All these musical connotations, of course, flow from the speaker's stated intention in stanza 1 that with his lover absent at sea, he must content himself with making a song about their love rather than actual lovemaking ("No stream of greater love advancing now / Than, singing"). The lines in stanza 4 continue: "The harbor shoulders to resign in mingling / Mutual blood, transpiring as foreknown / And widening noon within your breast for gathering / All bright insinuations that my years have caught / For islands where must lead inviolably / Blue latitudes and levels of your eyes,—" (27). If the harbor, the "chancel port," represents the lover's homecoming, a return that takes place as expected ("transpiring as foreknown"), it also prefigures his subsequent and inevitable leave-taking for other ports of call, and perhaps for other loves, "insinuations" of whose existence the speaker has "caught," describing these others as "islands" to which the sailor's blue eyes, as well as the blue latitudes he crosses (reprising the "bridging circles" image of stanza 1), lead.

Though his affair with Emil Opfer Jr. may have been the most intense and meaningful of Crane's life, he knew by the period of writing "Voyages" that the very nature of love and time would bring that intensity to an end, that the island that was Emil would be left behind (an ending foreshadowed here and directly confronted in "Voyages V") as the speaker journeyed onward toward that image of the personified ideal, the "lounged goddess" of "Belle Isle." But though "love foresees the end," as Crane says in "Quaker Hill," still at this point in "Voyages IV" the beloved is about to return, and the speaker can say, "In this expectant, still exclaim receive / The secret oar and petals of all love," with the expected "this" being both the return and the subsequent, inevitable departure. Yet another instance of phallic imagery, the "secret oar" of love owes part of its appropriateness to the beloved's being a returning sailor, while the "petals" image resonates back through the various flower figurations in "Voyages" to suggest the phallic associations of stamen and pistil.

"Voyages V" opens with an evocation of the harbor, seen at night from the bedroom window of the speaker and his returned lover, and with the speaker's apprehensiveness about the waning of their love suggested by the etymological root of the section's first word, the Latin *meticulosus,* "fearful":

> Meticulous, past midnight in clear rime,
> Infrangible and lonely, smooth as though cast
> Together in one merciless white blade—
> The bay estuaries fleck the hard sky limits.
>
> —As if too brittle or too clear to touch!
> The cables of our sleep so swiftly filed,
> Already hang, shred ends from remembered stars.
> One frozen trackless smile . . . (27)

It is late and cold with frost, but the "rime" here also points echoically to the poetic journey of turning this love into song (and perhaps resonates back to the albatross of "Voyages IV" and its origin in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"). The bay estuaries that recall the tides' ceaseless movement and the change time inevitably brings are described as "one merciless white blade," the metaphoric instrument that has "filed" the "cables" of the lovers' sleep, as if their bodies were moored vessels to which pirates had swum and cut the anchor cables, suggesting that the sailor lover must depart on the tide at dawn. The recurring Cranian figure of the "smile"—as in "Lachrymae Christi"'s "Unmangled target smile" of Dionysus (from which the Olympian gods sprang in Nietzsche's words) or the "receptive smile" (from "The Wine Menagerie") of love returned, of mutual attraction—becomes here the "frozen trackless smile" of love's joys, its starry moments, proleptically "remembered," the smile of wry wisdom.

The speaker continues, "What words / Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we // Are overtaken. Now no cry, no sword / Can fasten or deflect the tidal wedge, / Slow tyranny of moonlight, moonlight loved / And changed . . . " The moonlight is deaf, indifferent to any outcry against being overtaken by time and change which the lovers might raise, for of course it is the moon's own gravitational pull that causes the tides upon whose rising or receding the sailor must depart. And no sword can fend off the temporal piracy that drives a "tidal wedge" between the lovers. In "Voyages II" Crane had compared his and the sailor's love to the lunar attraction of the sea, but now the "slow tyranny" that causes the tides and thus the lover's departure is indeed "moonlight loved / And changed." The stanza continues "'There's // Nothing like this in the world,' you say, / Knowing I cannot touch your hand and look / Too, into that godless cleft of sky / Where nothing turns but dead sands flashing. // '—And never to quite understand!'" (27–28). The "dead sands flashing" are at once the moonlit sands of the bay estuaries and the distant sandy beaches toward which the departing lover will be headed, as well as grains of sand running through an hourglass reminiscent of the image in "Passage": "Sand troughed us in

a glittering abyss" (16). Although the lover says there's nothing like this in the world, perhaps referring both to the view of the harbor seen by moonlight and to the physical communion the two have enjoyed, the speaker's reaction is troubled, registering natural beauty's indifference ("that godless cleft of sky") to all human concerns and thus how seemingly unnoticing, if not accepting or indifferent, the lover is to the change occurring in their relationship.

The lover's final comment suggests an incomprehension of the link between the natural cycle of the rising and falling tides and the human cycle of rising and falling passion. At least that is how the speaker appears to understand the lover's remark: he says, "No, / In all the argosy of your bright hair I dreamed / Nothing so flagless as this piracy." The reference to piracy harks back to the images of "cables . . . swiftly filed" and of "no cry, no sword" able to "deflect this tidal wedge," as if a ship had been boarded at night by pirates while its crew slept. This association, of course, points back even further to the imagery of San Salvador and the Caribbean in "Voyages II," which is to say, to the Spanish Main, the principal venue for piracy in the New World. The piracy is "flagless" in the sense that the lover's "bright hair," an image of physical beauty and attraction, was not a warning sign for the speaker of his lover's potential attractiveness for, and thus attraction to, others. In imaging the lover's "bright hair" as an "argosy," Crane depends on two meanings of the word ("a large ship" and "a rich supply") though he may also intend an imaginative etymology that would find its root in the name of the first ship, Jason's Argo.

The poem ends with the speaker resigning himself to the lover's departure and the waning of their love: "But now / Draw in your head, alone and too tall here, / Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam; / Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know: / Draw in your breath and sleep the long way home" (21). Though the two are together in the bedroom, the lover is already "alone," his mind anticipating the next voyage, his eyes already "in the slant of drifting foam," an image recalling "The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise" in "Voyages II." And since that earlier image of spindrift, of windblown "drifting foam," is linked to an image of death ("the vortex of the grave"), then a similar association with death occurs in the next line from "Voyages V," where the "ghosts" of the other people, whom the sailor has loved and left and whom the speaker does not know, are said to "seal" his breath, apparently with a kiss but certainly in a word that echoes the sea and the spindrift-gazing, phallic-shaped seal. The sailor, who had apparently been leaning out the window to look at the harbor, is told at the start of the passage, "Draw in your head," and at the end, "Draw in your breath," in effect, to remove it from those past loves of whom the speaker is ignorant. Then in a final ironic turn he tells the lover to "sleep the long way home," suggesting that the sailor's true home is not here with the speaker but on the sea for which the sailor will always depart. (One cannot help but hear an echo in that final phrase of the title of the 1917 one-act play about seafarers by Crane's friend Eugene O'Neill, "The Long Voyage Home.")

In "Voyages VI," the poem's concluding section, the sailor-lover, having presumably taken to sea again, has left both the speaker and the poem. The section presents the speaker as he tries, with the waning of this real, individual love affair, to recover from this betrayal by renewing his commitment to love, imaginatively embarking on a sea voyage of his own to its idealized personification. The section's opening ("Where icy and bright dungeons lift / Of swimmers their lost morning eyes") recalls that linking of lovers and drowning in Keats's *Endymion*, evoked by the figure of Glaucus, as well as a similar linking from Marlowe and Chapman's *Hero and Leander,* alluded to by Crane in his Marlovian epigraph to "Three Songs" and in the line from "Cutty Sark": "*Leander* / (last trip a tragedy)" (53). "Voyages VI" continues, "And ocean rivers, churning, shift / Green borders under stranger skies"—the "ocean rivers" being either sea currents or rivers that pour into the sea. "Repose of Rivers" and "Voyages VI" were written and first published in 1926, and just as we interpreted "Repose of Rivers" as a rite-of-passage poem depicting Crane's poetic development from adolescence to maturity, so one might also see "Voyages" as a rite-of-passage poem depicting a similar progress in the speaker's understanding of the nature of love—from the real and temporal to his continued allegiance to the ideal and immutable.

Stanza 2 opens, "Steadily as a shell secretes / Its beating leagues of monotone, / Or as many waters trough the sun's / Red kelson past the cape's wet stone." The shell image, of course, resonates back through several earlier poems in *White Buildings*. The sense here is of a seashell held to the ear, reproducing the monotonous sound of the waves, but also perhaps of a small boat (a shell) powered by oars, its prow beating its way through the leagues of a long voyage, the two images together (shell and monotone) recalling "The portent wound in corridors of shells" and the "*Mono*dy" (italics mine) that "shall not wake the mariner" in "At Melville's Tomb." And the image of a shell that produces a sound also suggests the story of the lyre's invention, when Mercury strung cords across a tortoise shell and presented the first lyre to Apollo, who gave it to his son Orpheus. Given Orpheus's association with the lyre and with the willow tree—an association invoked earlier to explain the occurrence of the willow image at the beginning, middle, and end of "Repose of Rivers" as marking the journey down a river to the sea as specifically one of poetic development—the lyre connotation of the word *shell* in stanza 2 of "Voyages VI" would explain why the speaker's sea journey ultimately brings him to an isle where the Word "holds / Hushed *willows* anchored in its glow" (italics mine). The culmination of his voyage, unlike Orpheus's descent to the goddess of the dead in order to bring his beloved back to life, is rather, after the death of the speaker's most intense love affair, a journey to the goddess of love to resuscitate the ideal of love as a living principle in his consciousness. And, of course, the journey of Orpheus's severed head down the river Hebrus to the sea and thence to the isle of Lesbos is a further allusive background to the speaker's sea journey to Belle Isle.

The word *shell* in "Voyages VI" calls up yet another echo from an earlier

poem in *White Buildings.* Recall that in "The Wine Menagerie" (a poem, like "Repose of Rivers" and "Voyages VI," completed and first published in 1926), the speaker, in a state of Dionysian intoxication, finds his sense of universal brotherhood enables him "to travel in a tear / Sparkling alone, within another's will" until his "blood dreams a receptive smile / Wherein new purities are snared; where chimes / Before some flame of gaunt repose a shell / Tolled once, perhaps, by every tongue in hell" (17). If the dream of "a receptive smile" evokes the speaker's hope that this feeling of universal brotherhood might become individualized in a prospective lover, then the lines that immediately follow reflect his experience of how often this hope has been disillusioned. And if the "flame of gaunt repose" is the haunting memory of an old flame, then the condition of the speaker—who tries to recover something resembling that great love with the kind of person he could pick up in "Wine Menagerie"'s saloon—could well be described as "hellish." The collocation of *shell* (lyre) and *hell* in this context would then evoke Orpheus's failed attempt to bring back his lost love from the underworld as an analogue of the speaker's failed attempt to recover his old flame in a one-night stand. But the shell imagined in these lines also resembles a bell chimed by the tongues of those in hell, as if their tongues were the clapper of the bell that "tolled" (told) their disillusion and misery. (We should note in passing that the linking in "Wine Menagerie" of the words *shell* and *repose* is also reprised in "Voyages VI" when the shell that "secretes" the sea journey's "beating leagues of monotone" leads to the vision of the "lounged goddess" whose eyes "smile unsearchable repose.") Whether it is a seashell (which reproduces the sounds of the ocean when held to the ear) or a lyre or a bell, the shell image in these poems is an example of the continuous metaphoric transformation that drives the Cranian "dynamics of inferential mention."

In the second stanza of "Voyages VI," the sun, either rising or setting on the sea, is evoked as a ship whose "Red kelson" ("the longitudinal structure running above and fastened to the keel of a ship to . . . strengthen its framework") is said to be "troughed" (channeled) by "many waters." The phrase "many waters" recalls the description of the second coming of Jesus in the book of Revelation: "his voice as the sound of many waters . . . and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Revelation 1:14–16). The author of Revelation borrowed the phrase "many waters" from Ezekiel's vision of God in the Old Testament: "Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters" (Ezekiel 43:1–2). If Crane meant the phrase "many waters" to allude to these two biblical settings, then the Ezekiel passage, which locates God's "glory" (literally, a ring of light, an aureole or corona) as coming from the east, would suggest that Crane's sun "troughed" by "many waters" is the rising sun. The Revelation passage would thus suggest that the poem's vision of the "lounged goddess" is to be considered a culminating revelation like that at the end of the New Testament, not the end of a world but the movement from the real world to a

plane of higher consciousness. Both of these allusions are possibilities, but I would argue that for Crane the biblical phrase "many waters" was further mediated through a source much closer to him in time and locale, a source whom the poetic quester confronted in "The Tunnel" section of *The Bridge* as a possible prefiguration of his own fate.

Poe's "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (1839) is the first of his three Platonic dialogues (the others being "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" [1841] and "The Power of Words" [1845]), in which departed spirits converse about philosophical issues. Charmion, who has been dead ten years, asks the newly deceased Eiros to recount "the details of that stupendous event which threw you among us" (Poe, *Collected* 2:456), the event being no less than the end of the world. Eiros tells how a comet struck the earth, greatly increasing the proportion of oxygen in the atmosphere so that any existing fire fed by pure oxygen turned immediately into a world-consuming conflagration. When Eiros describes her own death as involving a "terrible darkness" and "that mad, rushing, horrible sound, like the 'voice of many waters'" (2:456), the quote in effect identifies the end of the world by fire with the event prophesied in Revelation. Yet the end envisioned by the author of Revelation is not specifically associated with fire. That association was made in 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." If Crane intends the phrase "many waters" to recall the apocalyptic vision of Revelation (as well as Poe's use of it in "Eiros and Charmion" to identify the fiery end of the world as being that prophesied in Revelation), then one can better understand the implied image in stanza 3 of a fiery consummation toward which the "many waters" have channeled the sun's burning vessel: "O rivers mingling toward the sky / And harbor of the phoenix' breast."

The phoenix is, of course, the mythical bird that lived five hundred years and then burned itself on a funeral pyre only to have a new phoenix spring from its ashes to live a similar term of years and end the same way, and it is an oft-repeated poetic image of resurrection and immortality. In the very first poem in *White Buildings,* Crane associates love and passion with fire and identifies himself as one whose fate is to be willingly consumed, figured as the attraction between the "still / Imploring flame" and the moth, whose ashes are "white falling flakes" that leave behind a "smoking souvenir." Given this sense of Crane's fateful proclivities, we can better appreciate his construction of his volume's culminating vision around allusions to an ultimate revelation, a fiery consummation of the world, and an immortal bird resurrected from the flames. (Recall in this regard Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of the myth of the phoenix as "the bird which, as often as it is consumed by fire, emerges rejuvenated once more, and which probably bore the significance of a penis revivified after its collapse" [Freud 22:191].) Further, the poem's initial image of the swimmers' "lost morning eyes" lifted from the sea's "dungeons," now seems, in light of the apocalyptic resonance of "many waters," an allusion to that

moment of the general resurrection when "The sea gave up the dead that were in it" (Revelation 20:13). Recall as well that in *Endymion*'s Glaucus episode the drowned lovers are ultimately brought back to life and that in *Hero and Leander* the dead lovers are given their own sort of resurrection by being transformed into birds. We should also note that the apocalyptic resonance of "many waters," coupled with the image of "rivers mingling toward the sky / And harbor of the phoenix' breast," anticipates the figuration in "The Tunnel" of the poetic quester's rise from beneath the East River as the subway train comes back up out of the tunnel: "And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope, / The sod and billow breaking,—lifting ground, / —A sound of waters bending astride the sky / Unceasing with some Word that will not die . . . !" (70), a similarity of imagery further underlined by the fact that the speaker in "Voyages VI" is journeying toward a vision of "The imaged Word" (29).

The image, both implicit and explicit, of love as fire continues in stanzas 3 and 4: "My eyes pressed black against the prow, / —Thy derelict and blinded guest // Waiting, afire, what name, unspoke, / I cannot claim: let thy waves rear / More savage than the death of kings, / Some splintered garland for the seer" (28). The speaker describes himself as "afire," seeking some ultimate revelation, a fiery vision that has the power to blind, a name unspoken that recalls the moment in "Southern Cross" when the quester, voyaging in the Caribbean, says, "I wanted you, nameless Woman of the South / . . . It is blood to remember; it is fire / To stammer back . . . It is / God—your namelessness" (61). Though the "Woman of the South" is nameless, still, Crane tries several names: "Eve! Magdalene! / or Mary, you?" and even "O simian Venus" (61), though, as we suggested earlier, in our analysis of the way the triple female archetype of virgin-mother-lover is distributed through the "Three Songs," the "Southern Cross" section primarily evokes the mother figure, the woman who is nameless, who cannot be named because she is for the son a forbidden object of sexual desire.

The images of a "blinded guest" and a "seer" applied to the speaker in "Voyages VI" combine to suggest the figure of a blind seer like Tiresias, a figure with particular relevance here. Ovid recounts in the *Metamorphoses* (*Ovid* 3:147–49) how Tiresias came upon two huge serpents mating and struck them a blow with his staff, with the result that he was changed from a man into a woman and remained so for seven years. In the eighth year he came upon the same serpents, struck them again, and was changed back into a man. Because he had been both a woman and a man, Tiresias was called upon to settle a dispute between Jupiter and Juno about which sex derived the greater pleasure from intercourse. Jupiter said that it was women, Juno that it was men. Tiresias decided in favor of Jupiter. Juno in revenge struck Tiresias blind, but Jupiter in return for Tiresias's loss of sight gave him the power of prophecy, of seeing the future. Crane knew this passage in Ovid, for Eliot quotes it in its entirety in the footnote to line 218 of *The Waste Land,* a footnote to the lines: "And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed; / I who have sat by Thebes below the wall / And walked among the lowest of the dead" (*Complete* 44). Another

reason Crane would have known the Tiresias passage in the *Metamorphoses* and would have alluded to it is that it immediately follows Ovid's description of why Dionysus is called "the twice-born." Ovid recounts how Jupiter, fulfilling his promise to the mortal woman Semele to make love to her in the same form that he made love to Juno, appears bearing his lightning bolts and incinerates Semele in the act of intercourse—a fiery consummation indeed. If the blind-seer image applied to the speaker in "Voyages VI" is an allusion to Tiresias, then its appropriateness would derive in part from the sense of Tiresias as a bisexual arbiter of the physical pleasures of love, with the added sense for Crane of Tiresias evoking the optional pleasure of playing a male or female role in homosexual coitus. Furthermore, as the prophet who revealed Oedipus's incest with his mother and his killing of his father as the cause of the plague affecting Thebes, Tiresias may well have connoted for Crane, at the period he was writing "Voyages," some sense of the way his own particular form of love had been shaped by a too close attachment to his own mother.

That the citation of the Ovid passage by Eliot may have focused Crane's attention on Tiresias is likely, given Eliot's influence on many of the poems in *White Buildings*. The name of the island toward which the speaker is headed in "Voyages VI" was probably suggested by its mention in Eliot's "Gerontion": "Gull against the wind, in the windy straits / Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn, / White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims, / And an old man driven by the Trades / To a sleepy corner" (*Complete* 23). The actual Strait of Belle Isle that Eliot refers to is a channel between the northern tip of Newfoundland and southeast Labrador, but Crane's island of that name, representing an imaginative identification of the Platonic ideals of Love and the Beautiful, would seem, given the southern location of much of the scenery in "Voyages," to be in the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico. On the other hand, Crane's "Belle Isle" *may* be situated in the North Atlantic, given "Voyages VI"'s initial image of "icy and bright dungeons" as well as the south/north polarity set up in "Voyages IV" by the returning lover's journey being "from palms to the severe / Chilled albatross's white immutability"—in which case the northern location for Belle Isle would suggest the movement from the southern heat of physical love to the severe spiritual ideal of love. That the speaker's vessel makes its way through a sea whose "waves rear / More savage than the death of kings / Some splintered garland for the seer" apparently alludes to the fact that Tiresias's revelation of the man who killed the previous Theban king merits at most a "splintered" garland because it resulted in the suicide of the present queen, Jocasta, and the blinding and exile of the present king, Oedipus.

The fifth stanza of "Voyages VI" describes the speaker's boat as being driven by a sirocco, as it approaches the island of the "lounged goddess." Recall that earlier we discussed the myth of Venus's birth from the sea foam and her being blown across the waves on a cockleshell to the island of Cyprus. One of the meanings of *sirocco* is a hot wind from the Libyan desert that blows on the Mediterranean northern coast; its mention here

thus evokes the Mediterranean location of Venus's isle in the myth and further identifies the poem's "lounged goddess" with the goddess of love, though the location of the poem's Belle Isle is, as we said, apparently either the Caribbean or the North Atlantic. But such a mingling of locations is matched by an overlaying of seasons in stanza 5, where "solstice thunders, crept away, / Like a cliff swinging or a sail / Flung into April's inmost day." The image of the summer solstice (June 21) imports a sense of heat into the spring (April) to match the hot wind of the sirocco as the sail of the speaker's boat approaches the cliffs of Belle Isle.

With stanza 6 the island has been reached: "Creation's blithe and petalled word / To the lounged goddess when she rose / Conceding dialogue with eyes / That smile unsearchable repose"—the island to which the goddess had been blown on her cockleshell in Botticelli's painting (perhaps another connotation of the shell image in stanza 2). That creation's word is described as "petalled" refers back to the image in the last line of "Voyages IV" ("The secret oar and petals of all love"), but it also evokes the root of *petal* from the Greek *petalon,* related to *petannynai,* meaning "to spread out or unfold," the sense being that creation has unfolded at a word of love (hence, the image of the "Unfolded floating dais" in the next stanza). The collocation of the words *blithe* and *repose* in stanza 6 recalls the importance of these terms in Pater's essay on Winckelmann in *The Renaissance,* where he repeatedly identifies them as "the supreme characteristics of the Hellenic ideal" (170) of beauty. He further theorizes that the recovery of the Hellenic ideal during the Renaissance, the reemergence of a Hellenic spirit out of the sorrowfulness that pervaded medieval Germanic art, depended on the fact that "in the very 'worship of sorrow' the native blitheness of art asserted itself. The religious spirit, as Hegel says, 'smiled through its tears,'" so "perfectly did the young Raphael infuse that *Heiterkeit,* that pagan blitheness, into religious works." Pater adds, "But in proportion as the gift of smiling was found once more, there came also an aspiration towards that lost antique art, some relics of which Christian art had buried in itself, ready to work wonders when their day came" (180). Given the connection Pater makes between "the gift of smiling" and "the blitheness of art," one can see why Crane in stanza 6 links "Creation's blithe . . . word" (in the sense of artistic creation) to the image of the goddess's "eyes / That smile unsearchable repose." Pater argues that "for us of the modern world, with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests, distracted by so many sorrows, with many preoccupations, . . . the problem of unity with ourselves, in blitheness and repose, is far harder than it was for the Greek within the simple terms of antique life" (182). But he suggests that "in Goethe's romances, . . . we have high examples of modern art dealing . . . with modern life . . . as the modern mind must regard it, yet reflecting upon it blitheness and repose" (185).

In the seventh stanza, Crane hails Belle Isle as the "Still fervid covenant." The word *fervid* continues the apocalyptic flames-of-love imagery of the earlier stanzas but here it is linked through the word *covenant* to another end-of-the-world scene, God's destruction of the world by water

in Genesis. In Genesis 9:11–17, God says that He has placed a rainbow in the clouds as the sign of His "covenant" with the earth that He will never destroy it again by water, a detail that explains why the description of Belle Isle as a "fervid covenant" leads almost immediately in stanza 7 to the image of rainbows: "Unfolded floating dais before / Which rainbows twine continual hair— / Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!" If the covenant and rainbow images allude to the flood of Genesis, they do so to reinforce the apocalyptic aura of this final vision, this revelation, of ideal Love personified in the "lounged goddess" but also to contrast the life-destroying character of the Old Testament flood with the life-affirming character of the fiery consummation associated with the pagan Venus. The ideal represented by the floating body, the Beautiful Island, is a spiritualization—a bright, transparent shadow-outline imaging the concept of a Platonic idea considered as an ideal—of the reality of physical love, which is to say that Belle Isle is the "white echo" of that phallic "oar" Crane apostrophized at the end of "Voyages IV," with the word *echo* evoking the name of the nymph who represents Narcissus's rejection of heterosexual love.

The final stanza's "imaged Word, it is, that holds / Hushed willows anchored in its glow" depicts an apotheosis of Love as the Logos, the mental Word that, according to the ancient Greeks, represented Reason as the controlling principle that holds the universe together, that unifies the totality of diverse things in an image. But it has always seemed to me that the stanza's first line admits of two readings: "It is the imaged Word that holds" but also "*It is* [is] the imaged Word that holds"—the latter reading identifying the imaged Word of love with existence, with pure Being, as the universal bonding agent of creation. There is, of course, a sense in which the imaged Word is for Crane the imagined word of poetry and thus a sense in which the figure of the lounged goddess of ideal love, Venus, at the end of "Voyages" merges with that of ideal beauty, Helen, at the end of "Faustus and Helen." This merging suggests that the ideal form of love, which can know no betrayal or farewell, is the poet's all-consuming passion for his art. If *willows* (with its Orphic association) is a metonym for poetry, then *hushed,* a word suggesting audibility, would represent poetry as spoken, while the visual *glow* would represent it as written. One could see how the lasting quality of writing as opposed to the ephemerality of the spoken could be said to "hold" the willows of poetry "anchored" in its "glow," an opposition similar to that of the spoken "accents" of farewell and the written poem's "unbetrayable reply." If one sense, then, of the imaged Word of love is the imagined words of the poem that visually incarnate the love of beauty on the page, then the association of the willow image with the poet Orpheus and thus with the goddess of the dead (to whom Orpheus carries willow branches as an offering that commemorates his having originally acquired the gift of poetic song by touching the willow trees in Persephone's sacred grove at Delphi) adds by implication to those two females whose figures merge in "Voyages VI" a third—the goddess Persephone, who signifies the poet's self-consuming passion for beauty even unto death and who presents death as the artist's only path to consummating his love of the ideal. What

this suggests is that these three female figures that emerge from "Faustus and Helen" and "Voyages" (Helen, Venus, and Persephone)—figures associated respectively with beauty, love, and death—were the earlier version of, in effect, the trial run for, the triple archetype of virgin-mother-lover that Crane elaborates in *The Bridge*, the composite figure that is balanced by the male triple archetype of god-son-lover that subliminally emerges in "Atlantis" as an ideal figuration of the poetic quester's aspirations.

§ 11
"The Broken Tower"

The best poem Crane wrote between the publication of *The Bridge* in 1930 and his death in April 1932 was "The Broken Tower," a work memorializing the only heterosexual love affair in his life and thus a work appropriately read in relation to the love poetry of "Voyages." As the scene of "Voyages" was the Caribbean, so that of "The Broken Tower" is Mexico, where Crane spent a year on a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1931 and 1932. In the poem, Crane links two events from that stay—one, the love affair with Peggy Baird Cowley, first consummated on Christmas night 1931 in Taxco, Mexico, to the deafening sound of church bells all through the night, and the other, again in Taxco, on January 27, 1932, when Crane himself rang these bells at dawn. Crane's friend Lesley Simpson recounts the second event:

> The night before, being troubled with insomnia, he [Hart] had risen before daybreak and walked down to the village square . . . Hart met the old Indian bell-ringer who was on his way down to the church. He and Hart were old friends, and he brought Hart up into the tower with him to help ring the bells. As Hart was swinging the clapper of the great bell, half drunk with its mighty music, the swift tropical dawn broke over the mountains. The sublimity of the scene and the thunder of the bells woke in Hart one of those gusts of joy of which only he was capable. He came striding up the hill afterwards in a sort of frenzy . . . seized my arm and bore me off to the plaza, where we sat in the shadow of the church. Hart the while pouring out a magnificent cascade of words. (Unterecker 722)

What Crane added to these two events was an imaginative armature borrowed from Stéphane Mallarmé's 1862 poem "Le Sonneur" ("The Bell Ringer").

In the aftermath of *The Bridge,* Crane had written poems, but nothing up to the level of his best work in *White Buildings* and his epic. During the time in Mexico, he had done nothing on his Guggenheim project of writing a tragedy on Montezuma, Cortes, and the conquest of Mexico. All the while he grew more dependent on alcohol, more subject to drunken sprees and self-destructive rages, accompanied by an ever more despairing sense that he had exhausted his poetic talent. But the effect of that first night of lovemaking with Peggy Cowley seems to have been instantaneous. Crane

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began writing "The Broken Tower" almost immediately, making part of the poem's theme his hope that this (for him) new kind of love had restored his inspiration and creative energy, and part his uncertainty about whether in the long run this relationship would bring a measure of domestic order that would enable him to work more consistently. Crane took from Mallarmé's poem the bell ringer as a symbol of the poet and the sound of the bells as his poems, an image Mallarmé himself had borrowed from Baudelaire's "La Cloche fêlée" ("The Cracked Bell"), in which the speaker, listening to the sound of a bell on a winter night, thinks that the bell is fortunate because, even though old, it still broadcasts, with a vigorous throat, its religious notes to the world. The speaker, whose soul is cracked ("mon âme est fêlée"), says that when he tries to sing his songs, his voice is as feeble as that of a wounded man lying by a lake of blood and expiring under a pile of dead bodies. The similarity in the titles of "The Cracked Bell" and "The Broken Tower" suggest that Crane knew the Baudelaire poem and its relation to Mallarmé's "Le Sonneur," a sonnet that is only slightly less despairing in tone than Baudelaire's:

> Cependant que la cloche éveille sa voix claire
> A l'air pur et limpide et profond du matin
> Et passe sur l'enfant qui jette pour lui plaire
> Un angelus parmi la lavande et le thym,
>
> Le sonneur effleuré par l'oiseau qu'il éclaire,
> Chevauchant tristement en geignant du latin
> Sur la pierre qui tend la corde séculaire,
> N'entend descendre à lui qu'un tintement lointain.
>
> Je suis cet homme. Hélas! de la nuit désireuse,
> J'ai beau tirer le câble à sonner l'Idéal,
> De froids péchés s'ébat un plumage féal,
>
> Et la voix ne me vient que par bribes and creuse!
> Mais, un jour, fatigué d'avoir enfin tiré,
> Ô Satan, j'ôterai la pierre et me pendrai. (Clouard and Leggewie 2:231)

Crane, with his all-or-nothing poetic sensibility, would have found appealing Mallarmé's notion that the poet—who has devoted himself to the Ideal but who lives in the real world where "*no ideals have ever been fully successful*" (64)—might one day, growing tired and despairing of his work, remove the stone that holds the bell rope and hang himself with it.

"The Broken Tower" begins "The bell-rope that gathers God at dawn / Dispatches me as though I dropped down the knell / Of a spent day—to wander the cathedral lawn / From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell" (106). The bell rope "gathers God at dawn" in a dual sense: it calls believers to morning Mass to receive God's body in the Eucharist, and it evokes the rising sun as an ancient god, a meaning Crane reprises in stanza 6. Evoking the difference between himself and the believers summoned by the bell, the speaker experiences the bell's call as a "knell," suggesting

both death and the end of the day (as opposed to the dawn), a nighttime in which the speaker wanders from "pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell." The speaker, as a poet, clearly belongs to Stephen Daedalus's *non serviam* party, the party of Lucifer, hence, the references to the "pit" and "hell," references echoing the last line of Mallarmé's "Le Sonneur," where the speaker invokes Satan.

The secular/religious opposition between the speaker and those summoned by the bells in "The Broken Tower" replicates a similar opposition in Mallarmé's poem. There the sound of the bells causes the child in the fields to say a prayer (the angelus) when he hears it, while the bell ringer, astride the stone that holds down the bell rope, is also praying ("en geignant du latin," moaning in Latin). But Mallarmé describes the bell rope, one of whose ends extends up into the tower toward heaven and the other, weighted by the stone, extends down into the quotidian world, as a secular rope ("la corde séculaire"), the rope with which the speaker says he may ultimately hang himself. (The stone attached to the end of the bell rope in Mallarmé's poem would also have resonated for Crane in the image of the speaker's "fixed stone of lust" in "Possessions.") In Mallarmé's sonnet, the details in the opening octave describing the actual bell ringer are paralleled, once the speaker has said, "I am that man," by details in the closing sestet applying to the poet. Thus, just as the bell ringer, in sounding the angelus, disturbs a bird in the tower that grazes him as it takes flight ("Le sonneur effleuré par l'oiseau"), with the ringer only hearing the sound of the bells as a distant tinkle ("un tintement lointain"), so the poet in a night full of desires ("de la nuit desireuse") rings the Ideal and imagines that from his cold sins, evoked as a flock of birds, falls a faithful or predictable plumage ("De froids pechés s'ébat un plumage féal"), with the voice only coming to him in snatches and scraps ("Et la voix ne me vient que par bribes et creuse!").

In stanza 2 of "The Broken Tower," Crane asks the reader "Have you not heard, have you not seen that corps / Of shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway"—an image that merges the movements of the bell ringer and the bells, the poet and his poems. It is not the first time in Crane's poetry that the body of his printed work (his corpus / "corps"), black ink on white paper, has been evoked as a shadow image of the author's self. Crane continues, "whose shoulders sway / Antiphonal carillons launched before / The stars are caught and hived in the sun's rays?" The movement of the bell ringer and his bells launch the carillon-like (i.e., chromatically tuned) sounds as if they were an antiphonal response to the dawn, the sunrise that seems to gather together (like bees in a hive) the individual points of starlight in the night sky to create the overwhelming light of day. Crane uses *carillon* here to refer not to the instrument (a set of stationary bells in a tower played by a keyboard or pedals) but to a melodic sound like that played by such an instrument. However, he may also have in mind the word's origin—from the French *carillon,* originally a chime of four bells, through Old French *carignon* and ultimately from Latin *quattuor,* "four" (*American College* 182)—the point being that if the bell ringer is an image

of the poet, then the former's creation of a carillon-like (i.e. four-toned) music matches the poet's creation of his own music in the *quatrains* of "The Broken Tower." Recall that earlier in discussing the formal structure of "Atlantis" with its twelve stanzas of eight lines each, we detected a similar underpinning of musical numbers: the eight tones of the octave and the twelve tones of the chromatic scale.

The words "I say" in the third stanza's opening line ("The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower") might seem at first glance simply a form of rhetorical emphasis, but what the words actually emphasize is that the bells, as a symbol of the speaker's poems, stand for something that is in fact "said"—the sound of the poet's voice captured on the page. Just as the ringing of the bells (with the persistent periodic vibration it creates) could structurally weaken the tower, causing its collapse, so the speaker's imaginative exertions in creating his poetry (coupled with the Dionysian excesses Crane considered the concomitant, if not the necessary, cause of the libido that drove his imagination) could cause the speaker's collapse. The stanza continues: the bells "swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave / Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score / Of broken intervals . . . And I, their sexton slave!" Crane's explicit identification with the sexton parallels Mallarmé's with the *sonneur* ("Je suis cet homme"), but the lines here clearly impart a sexual aura to the image of bells and tower. Of course for Crane tower and bridge were recurring figurations with sexual overtones linked to the Whitmanian notion of the poem-as-phallic-object. And the image of bells and tower, like that of "shells and sticks" in "Voyages I," might seem a veiled evocation of male genitalia and thus of Crane's previous sexual orientation, an orientation to which he perhaps felt as inextricably bound as he felt enslaved to the creation of poetry. But there is in the image of the bells that "swing I know not where" a suggestion not simply of something breaking down but of something breaking free, and the image of the bell's tongue (the male clapper inside the concave bell) engraving "Membrane through marrow" seems as well the speaker's first foreshadowing of the new sexual orientation that the poem's later stanzas celebrate.

The bell's tongue engraves the speaker's "long-*scattered* score / Of *broken* intervals" (italics mine). The word *scattered* immediately recalls the Dionysian *sparagmos,* which Crane associated with poetic creation. There is a dual sense of breaking and scattering: first, in terms of the creative act itself, a breaking down of the isolation of the poet's self in order to disperse and merge it, through a sense of Dionysian brotherhood, with all mankind and the universe, and second, in terms of publication, a dividing of the imagination into individual poems to be dispersed to the world. Both *score* and *intervals* attach the image of music to the ringing bells, *intervals* signifying the difference in pitch between tones, but the words can also be read as evoking the score of (the twenty or so) intervals of time scattered throughout the speaker's life when he could break free of the quotidian world to write poetry that captured the ideal. Yet those moments of high poetic freedom,

in the demands they make and the side effects they entail, have come to seem to the speaker a kind of bondage—"And I, their sexton slave!"

The fourth stanza evokes the sound of the bells dying away across the landscape: "Oval encyclicals in canyons heaping / The impasse high with choir. Banked voices slain! / Pagodas, campaniles with reveilles outleaping— / O terraced echoes prostrate on the plain! . . . " (106). The comparison of the church bells to "Oval encyclicals" evokes on the one hand the sound of the bells as a religious message, like a papal encyclical, addressed to the entire body of the faithful, and on the other, as the speaker's poem broadcast to the world, but with the possibility of his poems being blocked in the dead ends of the quotidian world, heaped in the impasses of canyons where banked voices are slain (a figuration recalling the image in "Cape Hatteras" of "each prison crypt / Of canyoned traffic" [55]). The stanza operates on the contrast between the vertical structures (the erections) that create the sound (pagodas, campaniles) and the horizontal landscape on which the sound dissipates ("echoes prostrate on the plain"), a contrast that subtly continues the imagery of poetry as a phallic, inseminating activity. The sense of the bells' sound as something constantly fading away extends into the image of transitoriness governing the fifth stanza: "And so it was I entered the broken world / To trace the visionary company of love, its voice / An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled) / But not for long to hold each desperate choice" (106). The speaker says that he entered, via his poems, the broken or fallen world of time and reality, in much the same way that the sound of the bells broadcast on the wind entered the world. In the case of the poet, however, the wind that holds for "an instant" the visionary voice proclaiming the love of ideal, eternal beauty evokes the romantic trope of the wind, the divine breath of in*spir*ation that Shelley implores in "Ode to the West Wind" to "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth! / And, by the incantation of this verse, // *Scatter,* as from an unextinguished hearth, / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!" (Shelley, *Selected Poetry* 392–93, italics mine). The ephemerality of the voice in the wind evokes the fleetingness of those visionary moments of poetic inspiration in Crane's life, as fleeting as Crane's many love affairs, each "desperate choice" that often ended in disillusion.

With stanza 6, the image of poetry as an inseminating activity continues: "My word I poured" the speaker says—the word *poured* recalling a similar usage in "The River," when Crane evokes the Father of Waters emptying into the Gulf, the river of time inseminating the gulf of eternity: "the Mississippi pours / . . . And flows within itself . . . / . . . Ahead / No embrace opens but the stinging sea; / The River lifts itself from its long bed . . . / —The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow, / Meeting the Gulf" (45). Regarding the poet's "word," the speaker in "The Broken Tower" asks, "But was it cognate, scored / Of that tribunal monarch of the air / Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word / In wounds pledged once to hope,—cleft to despair?" (106). The "tribunal monarch of

the air" is likely the sun god Phoebus Apollo (the poem begins, after all, with the sun rising as if summoned by the ringing of the poetic bells), the sun god who "embronzes earth." This appearance of an ancient god, reemerging from the shadow of the Christian deity, is the sort of thing one would expect from the poet of "Lachrymae Christi," but it probably also reflected an experience that Crane had had on a visit to Tepotzlán in September 1931 on "the eve of the yearly festival . . . of Tepoxtéco, the ancient Aztec god of pulque, whose temple, partially ruined . . . , still hangs on one of the perilous cliffs confronting the town," as he wrote to his friend William Wright (690). During the night Crane and a companion joined on the roof of the cathedral a group of Indians who were beating drums and playing flutes, Crane particularly noting "an ancient Aztec drum, pre-Conquest and guarded year after year from the destruction of priests and conquerors, that . . . had been beaten to propitiate the god, Tepoxtéco, the patron and protector of these people" (691). Crane was invited by the Indians to beat one of the drums, and as the sun rose the church bells began to ring, the drums and the bells evoking for Crane the simultaneous presence of the old and the new gods in Mexico, a scenario resembling that of the Quetzalcoatl cult in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent.*

The speaker's question in "The Broken Tower" is whether his poetic "word" is cognate (i.e., related by derivation, borrowing, or descent) with the "crystal Word" of the sun god, whether it is literally *cognatus* (the Latin root, from *co* + *gnatus,* past participle of *natus,* to be born; akin to Latin *gignere,* to beget), of the same birth or blood. The word *cognate* thus continues the sense of poetic insemination begun with *poured,* and that is, in turn, continued by the anatomical image of the monarch's "thigh" embronzing earth, inseminating it with life-giving sunlight. Because Apollo is the god of music as well as poetry, the speaker says that for his poetic "word" to be cognate the sun god must have "scored" or orchestrated it, made it harmonious with his "crystal Word," the poetic ideal toward which the speaker aspires, "crystal" evoking a sort of Emersonian "transparency." The speaker knows how often his poetic flights have fallen short of the ideal (a feeling Crane would have been especially subject to after his unproductive year in Mexico), so the striking of Apollo's "crystal Word," like a piercing ray of sunlight, is experienced as a wounding that raises the poet's hopes but cleaves him to despair when he fails to achieve that ideal—an image that points back to the "desperate choice" that ends the previous stanza.

The speaker's questioning continues in the next stanza, evoking an uncertainty about his sexual orientation, the source of the libido that drives his poetic activity. The speaker says that the "steep encroachments" of his blood have left him no answer—in effect, that his past sexual inclination has become so much a part of him, almost like his blood, that he might have no objective ground from which to ask the question about a new sexual orientation: "(could blood hold such a lofty tower / As flings the question true?)." But he asks the question nevertheless: "—or is it she / Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power?" In earlier works such as "The Mar-

riage of Faustus and Helen" and "Voyages," written when Crane seemed to have no questions about his homosexual orientation, the female figures in those poems were Helen and Venus, both distanced from the poet by being placed on the plane of the ideal and the eternal, by being immortal figures of beauty and love. But it is precisely the "sweet mortality" of the "she" invoked in "The Broken Tower" that marks her as a real person in the temporal world, and in the next stanza Crane seems to place the image of this real woman within the context of the powerful maternal archetype. As stanza 6's "My word I poured" evoked the image of seminal fluid, so in stanza 7 the fluid image becomes that of blood, which in turn leads in stanza 8 to images of the pulse and heartbeat. He says of the woman: "And through whose pulse I hear, counting the strokes / My veins recall and add, revived and sure / The angelus of wars my chest evokes: / What I hold healed, original now, and pure . . . " The speaker, "counting the strokes" of the woman's pulse and his own as if they were the striking of the bells that began the poem, says they resemble his heartbeat: "The angelus of wars my chest evokes."

Crane had, of course, employed the heartbeat image earlier in the poem "Paraphrase"—"a steady winking beat between / Systole, diastole spokes of a wheel"—but in "The Broken Tower" the war in his chest is apparently the conflict he feels, lying close enough to the woman's body to feel her pulse mingle with his own, between two different sexual orientations. That he describes his heartbeat as specifically the "angelus" of these wars has several implications. It harks back to the ringing of the church bells that opens "The Broken Tower" and to the image from Mallarmé's "Le Sonneur" of the child out in the fields who, on hearing the angelus rung, says a prayer. In Catholic countries the angelus (which takes its name from "Angelus Domini," the first words of the Latin prayer associated with it) was rung (as three groups of three chimes each and then as nine chimes in a row) by church bells at three hours during the day (6 A.M., noon, and 6 P.M.), and the faithful would stop to say the following prayer, interspersed with three Hail Marys:

> The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
> And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
> Hail Mary, etc. . . .
> Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
> Be it done unto me according to thy word.
> Hail Mary, etc. . . .
> And the Word was made flesh.
> And dwelt among us.
> Hail Mary, etc. . . .
> Pray for us O Holy Mother of God.
> That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
> Let us pray. Pour forth we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace
> into our hearts; that, we to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross,

be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Crane certainly knew of the prayer and of its thrice daily recitation as early as the writing of the "Ave Maria" section of *The Bridge,* in which Columbus and his crew gather around the cross-like mast of the ship to pray: "Some Angelus environs the cordage tree" (36). Earlier in discussing the conclusion of *The Bridge,* we invoked Freud's contention in his Leonardo da Vinci essay that the origin of male homosexuality lay in the unsatisfied mother taking "her little son in place of her husband, and by the too early maturing of his erotism," robbing "him of a part of his masculinity" (Freud 11:117), and we noted Crane's comment in a 1928 letter to a family member that there were "mixtures of elements" in his mother's profound attachment to him that were good neither for Grace nor for himself, adding that "Psychoanalysis reveals many things that it would be well for Grace to know" (Unterecker 565). Now if the war in the speaker's chest evokes the conflict between his previous homosexual orientation and his subsequent heterosexual affair, then it seems only appropriate for him to evoke this war by alluding to "the angelus," a prayer dominated by the image of a "holy mother" and of her insemination by God's word to give birth to the Word made flesh. That Father and Son are one in this act of procreation suggests the notion of mother/son incest and thus calls up the Freudian theory of the origin of male homosexuality, the mother's becoming in effect a blocking figure (the forbidden and forbidding female) in the son's life, preventing his sexual attachment to any other woman. As Crane's biographer Unterecker makes clear, by the time of writing "The Broken Tower" Crane had certainly come to view his mother's love for him as representing "a lifelong pattern of jealousy: Grace 'guarding' him from any deep affection . . . for the girls whom, in a more conventional boyhood, he might have come to love" (540). Note the intriguing parallels in imagery and language between the angelus and stanzas 6, 7, and 8 of "The Broken Tower." As we saw, in stanza 6 the speaker's statement "My word I poured," when coupled with the image of the monarch of the air's "thigh" that engenders the "crystal Word," evokes the notion of seminal fluid and of poetry as an inseminating activity, a fluid image transformed in stanza 7 to that of blood and giving rise in stanza 8 to images of pulse and heartbeat. Similarly, the angelus prayer begins with an image of the Word made flesh and then proceeds to an image of pouring ("Pour forth . . . , O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts") that suggests the heart's fluid (blood). If we are correct in reading "the angelus of wars" as evoking for Crane the image of his mother as a psychological blocking figure who prevented her son's engaging earlier in the sort of heterosexual relationship that "The Broken Tower" celebrates, then the appropriateness of this association could only have been strengthened for him by the coincidence that what the prayer asks to be poured into our "hearts" is "grace": his mother's maiden name was, of course, Grace Hart—the Hart/heart homonym having been one on which Crane had punned for most of his adult life. With the last line

of stanza 8, the war between the two sexual orientations seems to have tipped in favor of the heterosexual. His love affair with the "she / Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power" allows him to proclaim the triumph of "What I hold healed, original now, and pure," what he considers at this point a more characteristic sexual orientation for one of his gender, one that should have been his from birth.

The ninth stanza continues with the prospect that this new sexual orientation "builds, within, a tower that is not stone / (Not stone can jacket heaven)—but slip / Of pebbles,—visible wings of silence sown / In azure circles." That this new inclination is still tentative and uncertain is suggested by the speaker's claim that it cannot be symbolized by something as solid and achieved as a tower made of stone but rather only by a "slip / Of pebbles"—*slip* referring to "a mixture of finely divided clay and water used by potters" for casting earthenware artifacts. Note that the opening lines of stanza 9 also begin the speaker's movement away from the tower considered as a phallic object toward that which the object actually symbolizes—toward an erection that "builds, within." That this is said to be built up from a "slip / Of pebbles" is yet another example of a Cranian image pattern like "shells and sticks" from "Voyages I" and bells and tower from this poem, with the "pebbles" (i.e., stones) evoking the testicles. And as the image of a tower erected within gives way to that of birds flying ("visible wings of silence sown / In azure circles"), the movement from symbolic to actual, from phallus to penis, continues. In the same essay on Leonardo da Vinci in which he theorizes the origin of male homosexuality, Freud explains that fantasies of flying like a bird are "only a disguise for another wish": "When we consider that inquisitive children are told that babies are brought by a large bird, such as the stork; when we find that the ancients represented the phallus as having wings; that the commonest expression in German for male sexual activity is '*vögeln*' ["to bird": "*Vögel*" is the German for "bird"]; that the male organ is actually called '*l'uccello*' ["the bird"] in Italian," then we understand "that in dreams the wish to be able to fly is to be understood as nothing else than a longing to be capable of sexual performance" (Freud 11:125–26), the infantile wish to be capable of an adult activity.

This movement in stanza 9 from a phallic tower of stone to a tower within built from a slip of pebbles and then on to the flight of birds may have been influenced by a similar movement in Mallarmé's "Le Sonneur," where the actual ringing of the bells in the tower in the sonnet's initial octave makes the birds take flight, one of them grazing the bell ringer, a circumstance analogized by the poet in the closing sestet as his ringing the Ideal in a night full of desires that disturbs his cold sins, which take flight like a flock of birds and drop a shower of feathers (poems, perhaps written with a quill). At issue at the close of "The Broken Tower" is not simply a movement from the symbolic to the real, from poetry to sex, but the reverse movement as well. It is not simply a question of whether this new heterosexual orientation will last but whether the libido it creates (the "latent power" the woman "stirs") will be as productive for the writing of poetry as the previous homosexual orientation had been in creating poems

such as "Voyages." I would argue that this question is imported into the ninth stanza by the image of the "visible wings of silence" being "sown" specifically "in *azure* circles," for if Mallarmé's "Le Sonneur" lies behind the opening of "The Broken Tower," his poem "L'Azur" probably lies behind its ending.

In the opening stanza of "L'Azur," the speaker says that the serene irony of the sky's eternal azure overwhelms the impotent poet ("Le poète impuissant" [Flores 367]), who curses his genius across a desert of sorrows. The poet flees, with closed eyes, but he feels the azure observing and probing his empty soul ("Mon âme vide"), and he asks the fog to rise and interpose itself between him and the azure sky so as to build a great silent ceiling ("bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux" [368]). He then asks Ennui to come and stop up the blue holes in the sky that the birds wickedly make ("Cher Ennui, pour boucher d'une main jamais lasse / Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux" [368]). Finally, he asks the smoky soot of chimneys to come and blot out the dying sun on the horizon. But the sky (or Heaven) is dead ("Le Ciel est mort"), and he turns toward matter, asking it to grant him oblivion to the cruel Ideal and Sin ("donne, ô matière, / L'oubli de l'Idéal cruel et du Péché"), for since his brain is as empty as a pot of paint at the foot of a wall ("puisque enfin ma cervelle, vidée / Comme le pot de fard gisant au pied d'un mur") and no longer possesses the art to adorn the woeful idea, he wishes to yawn mournfully toward an obscure death ("Lugubrement bâiller vers un trépas obscur"). And the poem ends,

> En vain! L'Azur triomphe, et je l'entends qui chante
> Dans les cloches. Mon âme, il se fait voix pour plus
> Nous faire peur avec sa victoire méchante,
> Et du métal vivant sort en bleus angélus!
>
> Il roule par la brume, ancien and traverse
> Ta native agonie ainsi qu'un glaive sûr;
> Où fuir dans la révolte inutile and perverse?
> *Je suis hanté.* L'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur! (368)

As in "Le Sonneur" the speaker in "L'Azur" is a poet, a figure who feels his own impotence faced with the blue sky, an image of the Absolute, that reveals the emptiness of his soul. Where the speaker in "Le Sonneur" rang out the Ideal and disturbed his cold sins like a flock of birds in the belfry, in "L'Azur" the speaker sees the birds making blue holes in the sky, then asks the material world to consign the Ideal and Sin to oblivion, and finally hears the triumph of the azure in the sound of bells ringing "blue angeluses," an image recalling the opening stanza of "Le Sonneur" when the child, hearing the bells, says the angelus. In both poems the mood is despairing: on the one hand, the poet tires of the task of propounding the Ideal in a world where it seems to have no place, tiring even to the point of contemplating self-destruction, and, on the other, the poet is confronted by an infinite sky emptied of the ancient gods and the Christian God. Nonetheless, the azure represents the heights (poetic and otherwise) as-

sociated with the Ideal, from which he asks the material world to release him through a forgetfulness both of the Ideal and of Sin (i.e., the failure to achieve the Ideal) so that he can become one of the herd of men fated to die an obscure death. Yet he acknowledges at last that he is haunted by the azure that symbolizes the Absolute and cannot escape it, the word *azur* being repeated four times like the tolling of a bell. If the similarity of "The Broken Tower"'s "visible wings of silence *sown* / In azure circles" (italics mine) to "L'Azur"'s image of the birds making great blue holes in the sky (a resemblance further emphasized by the fact that *sowing* a seed requires making a hole in which to deposit it) leads us to note the further resemblances of imagery, theme, and mood of these two Mallarmé poems, it is because these poems are not simply sources but allusive backgrounds representing for Crane the grim alternative to his hope, expressed in "The Broken Tower," that this new love affair has restored his poetic powers, an alternative that darkly hedged this hope with his own uncertainty as embodied in the all-or-nothing, life-or-death mood of Mallarmé's poet of the Ideal.

In the last stanza of "The Broken Tower," the movement away from the stone bell tower as a phallic symbol toward the human organ it symbolizes continues: The previous stanza's image of the birds' flight that represented in Freud's words the "longing to be capable of sexual performance" evokes the desire for an adult sexual relationship with a woman rather than those previous homosexual relationships resulting from an infantile fixation on the mother. The image of the birds' flight leads immediately to a womb image: the "visible wings of silence sown / In azure circles, widening as they dip // The matrix of the heart." The notion of "sowing" as of seed and of the "matrix" as the space within which something originates (the word's maternal significance marked by its Latin root, *mater*) sets the stage for the imagery of male-female coitus that makes up the poem's closing lines, the fact that it is specifically the matrix "of the heart" suggesting that this other woman has succeeded to the mother's place in the speaker's affections.

The speaker continues, "lift down the eye / That shrines the quiet lake and swells a tower . . . " Freud characterized the eye as "the higher phallus," the power of sight that penetrates at a distance, and Crane, having made the flight of the bird dip downward to the matrix, now lifts down the eye to the lake, to the female moisture that causes the swelling of the tower. With that the reader suddenly recognizes this structure as essentially the same one Crane uses in "The Dance" when Maquokeeta (enacting the role of the Indian sky god) comes in a rainstorm as the eagle-serpent to inseminate Pocahontas (enacting the role of the earth goddess), a scenario that elucidates "The Broken Tower"'s final two lines: "The commodious, tall decorum of that sky / Unseals her earth and lifts love in its shower" (107). The sky's "decorum," its fittingness, is the way it fits, lying above the earth, the word *tall* suggesting the swelling of the tower and *commodious* suggesting the comfortable space that receives it. The couples' and the poem's climax coincide as her unsealed earth receives his shower.

Crane completed "The Broken Tower" in late March 1932 and sent off

copies to the editor of *Poetry* magazine and to his friends Malcolm Cowley and Sam Loveman in letters dated Easter Sunday, March 27, 1932. Perhaps Crane considered the dating of the letters somehow significant, as if the enclosed poem represented the resurrection of his poetic talent; he described "The Broken Tower" to Cowley as "about the 1st I've written in two years," adding "I'm getting too damned self-critical to write at all any more." He continued, "More than ever, however, do I implore your honest appraisal of this verse, prose, or nonsense—whatever it may seem," and he concludes with a plea that suggests his deep sense of uncertainty about the state of his talent, "please don't tell me anything you don't honestly mean" (730). By the time Crane embarked on the SS *Orizaba* in Veracruz on April 24, 1932, for his final trip north, he had heard from none of the people to whom he had sent copies of "The Broken Tower." The copy sent to *Poetry,* according to the magazine's editor, had gone astray in the mail. And Crane seems to have interpreted this silence as a tacit condemnation of the best thing he'd written in two years. One thinks again of the all-or-nothing, life-or-death image of the poet of the Ideal in the Mallarmé poems that Crane layered beneath "The Broken Tower," poems evoking the bleak alternative to that uncertain hope of new love and renewed inspiration Crane's poem expresses, and one recalls the initial description of Mallarmé in Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), the book that introduced Crane's generation of English-speaking poets to French Symbolism. Mallarmé was one of those "in whom the desire of perfection brings its own defeat . . . he was always divided between an absolute aim at the absolute, that is, the unattainable, and a too logical disdain for the compromise by which, after all, literature is literature" (62). Symons goes on to describe the difficulty of Mallarmé's poetry; his small body of work; "His mind . . . elliptical, and, relying with undue confidence on the intelligence of his readers" (63); his quest to use "words as if they had never been used before, that chimerical search after the virginity of language" (71) and for that absolute music of language that Mallarmé himself described: "The verse which out of many vocables remakes an entire word, new, unknown to the language, and as if magical, attains this isolation of speech" (Symons 73).

As the details characterizing Mallarmé's poetry accumulate in Symons's book, one suddenly finds oneself transported to that moment in Crane's "General Aims and Theories" when he describes his own poetry. Noting that there is, "strictly speaking," no such thing as "'absolute' experience," Crane nevertheless argues that "it seems evident that certain aesthetic experience (and this may for a time engross the total faculties of the spectator) can be called absolute, inasmuch as it approximates a formally convincing statement of a conception or apprehension of life that gains our unquestioning assent, and under the conditions of which our imagination is unable to suggest a further detail consistent with the design of the aesthetic whole," adding "I have been called an 'absolutist' in poetry" (162). Saying that he strives to achieve the impossible goal of establishing his poetry "as free from my own personality as from any chance evaluation on

the reader's part," he judges that "Such a poem is at least a stab at a truth, and to such an extent may be differentiated from other kinds of poetry and called 'absolute'" (163). In a sentence recalling Mallarmé's statement about a verse remaking out of "many vocables . . . an entire word, new, unknown to the language," Crane speaks of what he hopes to achieve through the "logic of metaphor": "It is as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new *word*, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward" (163).

Ten years before he wrote "The Broken Tower," during a more optimistic period in his life, Crane had characterized "Mallarmé and Huysmans" as "elegant weepers" in a January 23, 1922, letter to Gorham Munson, adding that it was "up to the following generation to haw-haw gloriously" (267), but by the spring of 1932 when he was heading north, back into the depths of the Great Depression, Crane's mood had become more attuned to the French poet's. Indeed, one can imagine that when Crane stood on the deck of the *Orizaba* as it entered the Gulf he thought of the opening and closing lines of Mallarmé's "Brise Marine," an English translation of which Symons had published in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*:

La chair est triste, hélas! et j'ai lu tous les livres.
Fuir! là-bas fuir! Je sens que des oiseaux sont ivres
D'être parmi l'écume inconnue et les cieux! . . .
Je partirai! Steamer balançant ta mâture,
Lève l'ancre . . .

Un Ennui, désolé par les cruels espoirs,
Croit encore à l'adieu suprême des mouchoirs!
Et, peut-être, les mâts, invitant les orages
Sont-ils de ceux qu'un vent penche sur les naufrages
Perdus, sans mâts, sans mâts ni fertiles îlots . . .
Mais, ô mon coeur, entends le chant des matelots! (Flores 369)

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Notes to Part I: *The Bridge*

Section 1

1. Crane, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters* 554. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent quotations from Crane's poetry, prose, or letters are from this edition.

Section 2

1. Still farther in the painting's background, the blue sky pales artfully toward the horizon without a trace of gold ground or the figure of God the Father watching from the heavens. In aerial perspective, the palest point on the horizon—located in this painting at the notch in the hills to the left of Christ—tends to be the equivalent (as a visual signifier of depth) of the vanishing point in linear perspective, the theoretical point of greatest depth in the painting. As Samuel Edgerton Jr. has pointed out in his book *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective,* the study of optics in medieval Europe was not just a science but "a branch of the Faith," for "its geometric concept of light-filled space provided some kind of rationalization of how God's grace pervaded the universe" in straight lines: "Meister Eckhart, the early fourteenth-century German mystic, noted that the soul 'sees' God just as the eye itself beholds a picture on the wall" (60). In linear perspective the vanishing point—the visual evocation of that point in infinity where parallel lines converge—shares certain attributes with the Infinite Being whose nature, transcending the dualities of the physical world, reveals itself to man as the ground where opposites coincide. Edgerton thinks that the Quattrocento painters "took seriously the moral imprimatur of the centric ray" (86), that is, the visual ray that in a frontal view runs from the central vanishing point to the artist's eye, intersecting the picture plane perpendicularly. Noting that Alberti in his *De pictura* expressed a preference for a single vanishing point "to be placed in the middle of the painted panel as the locus for all orthogonal lines," Edgerton suggests that Alberti "believed the didactic force" of the painting "would be enhanced by the godly properties" of the centric ray, which Alberti referred to as the "prince of rays" (86). Given the "godly properties" associated with the central vanishing point in linear perspective and the fact that in aerial perspective the palest point on the horizon has the same signifying function as the vanishing point (the point of infinite depth), I would suggest that although the gold ground has been replaced by the natural blue sky in this painting of the Crucifixion, the palest point on the horizon functions as a symbol of the all-seeing Father's presence, a visible, though abstract, representation of the invisible eye of God watching from infinity. In linear perspective the central vanishing point was treated by Renaissance artists as the apex of a visual pyramid whose base was the picture plane, and to this visual pyramid corresponded another whose base was also the picture plane but whose apex was the artist's eye. Such a schema may well have encouraged these artists to associate the significance of one apex with the other, in effect, to treat the central vanishing point as if it were the eye not of the

artist who painted the picture but of the Artist who fashioned the visible world. Such a notion may well have involved a theory of the reciprocal relationship of extromission and intromission (the two alternative concepts of vision prevalent in the late Gothic period), a theory in which visual rays might have been thought to issue extromissively from the eye of God (the Author of the light) to create, to render visible, the physical world and in turn to be absorbed intromissively by the artist's eye to create the picture of that world. A theory like this would account in part for the privileged status of the centric ray in paintings with a central vanishing point, for there the artist's, and thus the viewer's, gaze would be positioned on the same visual axis as the eye of God.

2. Recall that one of the crucial influences in the development of perspective in Western painting was the observation of objects reflected in mirrors. Edgerton points out that the first linear perspective pictures, Brunelleschi's "now-lost panels showing the Baptistery of Florence and the Palazzo Vecchio" (xvii), were meant to be viewed in a mirror by the observer precisely because the artist had made the paintings not by looking directly at the baptistery and the palazzo themselves but at their reflected images.

Section 3

1. Recall in this connection that William Butler Yeats was working on *A Vision* and its poetic rendering of the cycles of cultural history at the time Spengler's *Decline of the West* appeared. In the introduction to *A Vision,* Yeats goes out of his way to note that his spiritual instructors "drew their first symbolical map" of European history for him and "marked upon it the principal years of crisis, early in July 1918, some days before the publication of the first German edition of Spengler's *Decline of the West,* which, though founded upon a different philosophy, gives the same years of crisis and draws the same general conclusions" (*A Vision* 11). Yeats adds that when "in 1926 the English translation of Spengler's book came out, some weeks after *A Vision,* I found that not only were the dates that I had been given the same as his but whole metaphors and symbols that had seemed my work alone" (18). And Yeats disingenuously remarks, "I knew of no common source, no link between him and me, unless through 'The elemental things that go / About my table to and fro'" (19). Recall as well that it was Pater who, in his essay on Winckelmann in *The Renaissance,* proposed Goethe as a model of the union of Faustian knowledge and energy with Hellenistic beauty and repose: "Goethe illustrates," says Pater, "a union of the Romantic spirit, in its adventure, its variety, its profound subjectivity of soul, with Hellenism, in its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty—that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child . . . Goethe illustrates too, the preponderance in this marriage of the Hellenic element; and that element, in its true essence, was made known to him by Winckelmann" (181).

2. Because Spengler considers Faustian culture to be essentially Northern European in both origin and spirit—its point of origin being "the birth of the Romanesque style in the 10th century in the Northern plain between the Elbe and the Tagus" (1:183) and its spirit being Germanic or Gothic—the art of the Italian Renaissance is seen as simply a Southern European "*revolt against the spirit of the Faustian forest-music* of counterpoint, which at that time was preparing to vassalize the whole form-language of the Western Culture" (1:232). Because the Renaissance was a "*counter-movement,*" it necessarily "remained dependent upon the forms of

the original movement, and represented simply the effect of these upon a hesitant soul" (1:232). Gothic is "the *only* foundation of the Renaissance. The Renaissance never even touched the real Classical, let alone understood it or 'revived' it" (1:238). Concerning the Gothic influence on Renaissance painting, he notes: "In 1450 Rogier van der Weyden himself came to Florence, where his art was both admired and imitated. In 1470 Justus van Gent introduced oil-painting to Umbria, and Antonello da Messina brought what he had learned in the Netherlands to Venice. How much 'Dutch' and how little 'Classical' there is in the pictures of Filippino Lippi, Ghirlandaio and Botticelli and especially in the engravings of Pollaiulo! Or in Leonardo himself" (1:236).

The Renaissance, says Spengler, "as an anti-Gothic movement and a reaction against the spirit of polyphonic music has its Classical equivalent in the Dionysiac movement" which was a reaction "against the sculptural-Apollinian world-feeling" (1:233). The Renaissance and the Dionysiac movement each represent the "outbreak of deep-seated discordances" (1:233) within their respective cultures, a stand the culture "attempts to make against the Destiny that at last it comprehends. The inwardly recalcitrant forces—*Faust's second Soul that would separate itself from the other*—are striving to deflect the sense of the Culture, . . . to evade its inexorable necessity . . . This anxiety fastened itself in Greece to the Dionysus-cult with its musical, dematerializing, body-squandering orgasm, and in the Renaissance to the tradition of the Antique and its cult of the bodily-plastic tradition" (1:233–34). Thus for Spengler the Apollinian and Faustian cultures are antithetical doubles of one another precisely because each had, according to his understanding, generated within itself its own antithetical double, its own counterimage, as a means of working out its identity and destiny. The "sculptural-Apollinian" culture found its counterimage in the musical Dionysus cult whose "dematerializing, body-squandering" goal was the opposite of the Greek sculptural ideal of full bodily presence, and in like manner the musical Faustian culture with its goal of restless, body-dissolving motion into infinite distance found its counterimage in the Renaissance's illusory revival of the sculptural-Apollinian ideal of beauty as finite repose. Renaissance art achieved, says Spengler, "a feeling for the bliss of perfect *nearness,* for pure, restful and *liberating* space-effects . . . It is not Classical, but it is a dream of Classical existence, the only dream of the Faustian soul in which it was able to forget itself" (1:238).

3. Because aerial perspective creates the illusion of depth by color rather than line, it tends, in Spengler's view, "to dissolve things" in space (1:239), melting their "edges into the background" (1:237) and thus confounding the Apollinian ideal of the proximate, clearly defined outline. The Faustian world-feeling "rejected the drawing style" and "transformed the linear perspective associated with the architectural motive into a purely aerial perspective rendered by imponderable gradations of tone" (1:279). By the end of the Renaissance, oil painting was becoming "a silent music of colour-illumined extension that created within itself *light-resistances,* which the understanding eye could grasp as things and as existence, and could set marching with an invisible swing and rhythm out into the distance. And with this spatial ordering, with its unremarked substitution of air- and light-perspective for line-perspective, the Renaissance was already, in essence, defeated" (1:244).

4. The colors of the horizon in Western painting—blue and green—are, in Spengler's view, "essentially atmospheric and not substantial colours": "they disembody, and they evoke impressions of expanse and distance and boundlessness" (1:245). Thus "an 'infinitesmal' blue-to-green is the space-creating element throughout the history of our perspective oil-painting, from the Venetians right

into the 19th Century" (1:245). As opposed to the Byzantine gold background, which asserted "the existence and activity of the divine spirit," the Gothic blue-green background of "far horizons and depth perspective" had "at first the appearance of something profane and worldly" (1:248), for it implied a change of religious dogma, a change in the conception of the nature of God and the manner of his presence in the world. The "final schism" between Eastern and Western Christianity took place almost at the same time "in Church and in Art" when in the West "the landscape-background of the depicted scene and the *dynamic* infiniteness of God were comprehended at the same moment" (1:249).

5. As Spengler remarks in describing this same Faustian impulse in Gothic architecture, "There is one and only one soul, the Faustian, that craves for a style that drives through walls into the limitless universe of space and makes both the exterior and the interior of the building complementary images of one and the same world-feeling" (1:224). Spengler contrasts Leonardo's outdoor, Renaissance painting and its "transitions of *atmospheric* light and dark, the soft edges, the outlines that merge in the depth, the domains of light and shade in which the individual figures are inseparably involved" with Rembrandt's indoor, Baroque painting in which "objects dissolve into mere coloured impressions, and forms lose their specific humanness and become collocations of strokes and patches that tell as elements of a passionate depth-rhythm" (1:287). He contends that what this type of painting "seizes and holds is by hypothesis a unique and never-recurring instant, not a landscape *in being* but a fleeting moment of the *history* thereof" (1:287). And this is why Baroque painting represents landscape physiognomically, as if it had an individual character and a personal history, as if it were "a part of the ego or the self-world in which the painter paints himself and the beholder sees himself. For the expansion of Nature into Distance reflects a *Destiny*" (1:287).

6. Because counterpoint evokes that special sense of the fleetingness of time peculiar to the Faustian historical dynamic, Spengler uses as a recurring image of this quality a contrapuntal musical form, the fugue. In a typical application of this image to painting, Spengler remarks that "for us, the portrait is *musical.* The look, the play of the mouth, the pose of head and hands—these things are a fugue of the subtlest meaning, a composition of many voices that *sounds* to the understanding beholder" (1:262). Spengler notes that in its use of visual counterpoint, Gothic art "had draped body, not for its own sake but for the sake of developing in the ornament of the drapery a form-language consonant with the language of the head and the hands in a fugue of Life" (1:266), while in a Baroque artist like Rembrandt "there is always interplay of bass melody in the costume and motives in the head" (1:266).

7. Spengler's notion of the dynamic structure of that soul is, not surprisingly, "a musical one; the sonata of the inner life has the will as first subject, thought and feeling as themes of the second subject; the movement is bound by the strict rules of a spiritual counterpoint, and psychology's business is to discover this counterpoint" (1:305).

8. In his study of the development of perspective, Edgerton points out the clear link between Brunelleschi's discovery of linear perspective and Columbus's feat of navigation. In 1400 Manuel Chrysoloras and Jacopo d'Angiolo brought to Florence from Constantinople a copy of Ptolemy's *Geographia.* The work consisted of "the eight books of Ptolemy's text plus twenty-seven maps, including a two-page *mappamundi*" (97) and provided three alternative cartographic methods, which "showed how to project the coordinates of any geographic location in the world,

and how to compensate for the distortion of the spherical surface when stretched out on a two-dimensional plane" (100). These methods, which revolutionized Western map making, also showed artists how to project three-dimensional objects onto the two-dimensional picture surface, thus laying the groundwork for Brunelleschi's discovery. In 1412 Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly "wrote two commentaries on the Geographia. D'Ailly's commentaries on Ptolemy eventually found their way to the library of Christopher Columbus where . . . they made up his principal bedtime reading" (Edgerton 98–99). In his notebooks, Leonardo da Vinci says, "The eye is the master of astronomy. It makes cosmography . . . The eye carries men to different parts of the world . . . It has created architecture, and perspective, and divine painting . . . It has discovered navigation" (Edgerton 92). Summing up, Edgerton suggests that "the special geniuses of Leonardo da Vinci, Columbus, and Copernicus were given a very special catalysis at this time by the new communications revolution of linear perspective" (164–65).

9. Spengler also remarks that in the "visionary kind of artistic enjoyment" associated with Faustian music, "sight and hearing *equally* are bridges into the soul and nothing more" (1:220)—a comment that not only sheds light on the significance of Crane's major symbol but may even have suggested the imagery for a passage in "Atlantis" where Crane simultaneously compares the symbolic bridge to a cathedral organ and to the bridge of a ship on a voyage of discovery: "And like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom— / Sight, sound and flesh Thou leadest from time's realm / As love strikes clear direction for the helm" (73). Spengler himself uses the image of a church organ in a lengthy passage that includes references to Copernicus, Columbus, and the art of the fugue. Discussing Leonardo's varied artistic and scientific achievements, he notes that the painter's discovery of the circulation of the blood "was contemporary with that of Columbus" and that the two discoveries "have a deep affinity, for they signify the victory of the infinite over the material limitedness of the tangibly present" (1:278). Spengler then goes on to discuss what he considers "the grandest piece of artistic daring in the Renaissance"—Leonardo's "cartoon of the 'Adoration of the Magi' in the Uffizi": "Transcending all optical measures, everything then called drawing, outline, composition and grouping, he pushes fearlessly on to challenge eternal space; everything bodily floats like the planets in the Copernican system and the tones of a Bach organ-fugue in the dimness of old churches" (1:280).

Section 4

1. Whitman's characterization of Columbus as his visionary precursor would have had particular meaning for Crane in regard to *The Bridge*: In "Passage to India" Whitman interprets Columbus's achievement as the discovery of the land bridge between Europe and Asia, the discovery of a new world where Western scientific knowledge will be married to Eastern wisdom in the American higher consciousness—a linking of images that may well have influenced Crane's decision to continue the theme of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" (the union of modern science and ancient beauty in an American setting) in a poem whose principal symbol of America was a bridge.

2. As we noted earlier, Spengler considers the Faustian infinity craving expressed "in the acts of Copernicus and Columbus" as "a spiritual will-to-power," and to judge from the manuscripts of "Ave Maria," Crane originally conceived Columbus's voyage as a drama of wills. At the top of one of the manuscript pages

of an early draft, Crane typed the following lines, apparently as a reminder to himself:

> Columbus will - knowledge
> Isabella's will - Christ
> Ferdinand's will - gold
> - 3 ships
> - 2 destroyed
> 1 remaining will, Columbus (Unterecker 722 ff.)

To suggest the strength of Columbus's will, Crane emphasizes his isolation and loneliness, having him remark at one point that his belief in the voyage had made him an exile in his native city. Moreover, he feels that his patrons Ferdinand and Isabella have never really understood his visionary journey any more than his crew have. Spengler points out that in Faustian culture there are certain "types" of individuals who are "symptoms of the Western life-feeling, viz., the 'misunderstood' artist, the poet 'left to starve,' the 'derided discoverer,' the thinker who is 'centuries in advance of his time' and so on . . . Destinies of this sort have their basis in the passion of distance in which is concealed the desire-to-infinity and the will-to-power" (1:327). Spengler also notes that since "every high creator in Western history has in reality aimed . . . at something which only the few would comprehend" (1:327), we find everywhere in the Western arts "what we find nowhere in the Classical—the exclusive form" (1:328). Spengler's notion of the uniquely Faustian character of "the exclusive form" is an illuminating footnote to the notorious difficulty of Crane's poetry and links in an especially telling way Columbus and Crane, "the derided discoverer" and "the poet left to starve."

Section 5

1. Emerson may be echoing Thomas Carlyle's remark in *Sartor Resartus* that "Creation . . . lies before us, like a glorious Rainbow; but the Sun that made it lies behind us, hidden from us. Then, in that strange Dream, how we clutch at shadows as if they were substances" (54). One of Crane's continuing images of the illuminated arc of vision in *The Bridge* is the rainbow, an image whose resonances include the rainbow-bridge to Valhalla at the end of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and the rainbow-bridge to the overman in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (136, 163, 410), as well as that "magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Musselmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity" (*Portable Poe* 150) seen by the protagonist of Poe's "A Descent into the Maelstrom" as he enters the abyss. Poe is, of course, a poetic precursor with whom the quester has a visionary confrontation in "The Tunnel" section.

2. In "Ave Maria," for example, Columbus, keeping watch all night, gets his first glimpse of the new world when (like the quester looking toward the west) "biding the moon / Till dawn should clear that dim frontier," he sees the "first palm chevron the first lighted hill." In the next section, "The Harbor Dawn," the quester awakens from his dream vision of union with Pocahontas just as dawn is breaking, and later in "The Dance" section he arrives in the mythic nature-world of the Indian to witness the sacred marriage of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas as the Morning Star bleeds "immortally . . . into the dawn" (46). In "Cutty Sark," the quester, after his conversation with the sailor that mingles the voices of time and eternity, leaves the saloon as "the dawn" is "putting the Statue of Liberty out" and starts "walking home across the Bridge" (52–53) when he has his vision of the

winged freedom of the clipper ships. In "Cape Hatteras," the visionary Whitman is associated with "dayspring's spreading arc" (59), while in "Atlantis" the quester addresses the Bridge as "Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage . . . lifting night to cycloramic crest / Of deepest day" (73), linking the motifs of elevation, illumination, and visionary insight.

Section 6

1. In an alternative version of this figuration, the viewer, in looking ahead of him, gazes not into the future but the past and thus does not move forward along the timeline into the future, but rather the timeline itself moves, like a temporal river flowing past the viewer from the future behind his back into the past in front of him. This latter image of time is evoked by Fitzgerald at the end of *The Great Gatsby,* when Nick Carraway, comparing Gatsby's quest to the Dutch sailors' discovery of Long Island, characterizes the American belief in an "orgastic future that year by year recedes before us" as a movement of "boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Yet whichever of these two images we opt for, they both locate the foreshadowed future behind the observer.

Section 7

1. In his essay "The Acquisition and Control of Fire" (1932), Freud pursues the explication of this bird imagery in examining the myth of the punishment of Prometheus, the Titan who first brought fire to men. For his transgression Prometheus was chained to a rock and had a bird feed daily on his liver. Noting that "There can be no doubt about the mythological significance of flame as a phallus," Freud continues that if, as the ancients thought,

> the liver is the seat of passion, its significance, symbolically, is the same as that of fire itself . . . The bird which sates itself on the liver would then have the meaning of a penis—a meaning which is not strange to it in other connections, as we know from legends, dreams, linguistic usage and plastic representations in ancient times. A short step further brings us to the phoenix, the bird which, as often as it is consumed by fire, emerges rejuvenated once more, and which probably bore the significance of a penis revivified after its collapse. (Freud 22:190–91)

Section 8

1. One wonders if the opening lines of Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" (1941)—"I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river / Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable, / Patient to some degree, at first recognized as a frontier; / Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce; / Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges" (*Complete* 130)—are an oblique allusion to the builder of *The Bridge* and the muddy brown "river of time" that symbolized the problem of American history and myth Crane confronted in his poem. Eliot published "The Tunnel" section of *The Bridge* in the *Criterion* (November 1927), and in that section Crane echoes a line from the passage in *The Waste Land* that begins "Unreal City, / Under the brown fog of a winter dawn, / A crowd flowed over London Bridge." Eliot may have been returning the allusive compliment with his "strong brown god" of a river confronting "the builder of bridges." In any case,

there is little doubt that the strong brown river the St. Louis–born Eliot had in mind was the Mississippi.

Section 9

1. In Crane's nightmare of finding his mother's dismembered body in a trunk, he awakens in his old room "remembering that he had to hunt for something in the attic" but unable to recall what it was. This sense of searching for something we can't remember suggests, of course, that the dream itself will symbolically express this "forgotten" object that eludes direct representation, but it also suggests in this case that the forgotten object of desire is precisely that state prior to memory (prior to birth). This limit of memory that Crane refers to in his correspondence as "the oblivion of the Gulf" is that total absence or transcendence of figuration that, because it is unrepresentable in itself, is usually evoked by some form of transfiguration in a liminal state (e.g., dismemberment in a dream). Indeed, one might read this nightmare as a hieroglyph of the link between *dismembering* and *dis-remembering* as related to the womb fantasy, an oblique figuration of the physical price one must pay to return to that state prior to memory. In a manner not uncommon to the dream work, Crane's nightmare multiplies symbols of the same thing: the attic (a characteristic place, along with cellar and closet, of gothic entomb[womb]ment) that is contained in his grandmother's house contains a trunk that, in turn, contains the dismembered body of his mother.

2. This episode is perhaps meant to recall section 6 of Whitman's "The Sleepers" in which the poet tells how, when his mother was a girl, "a red squaw" came one day "to the old homestead" carrying "on her back . . . a bundle of rushes" (Whitman 300). Like the pioneer mother in "Indiana," the poet's mother in "The Sleepers" never forgot the impression the Indian squaw made on her, but here the similarity between the two episodes ends, for in Whitman's poem the red squaw is not an image of homelessness and racial decline but of natural freedom and beauty:

> Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded
> exquisitely as she spoke.
>
> My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the
> stranger,
> She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and
> full and pliant limbs,
> The more she look'd upon her she loved her,
> Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and
> purity . . . (Whitman 300)

If Crane is indeed evoking this episode, it is an allusion meant to heighten our sense of the disparity between the lost nature world of Pocahontas and the white mother's materialist world.

3. The mother's monologue is composed of such self-characterizing blind spots. One would have thought, for example, that the disastrous search for gold that cost her her husband would have taught the dangers of possessiveness, yet in trying to act as the mediatrix of her son's birthright, a birthright that seems more spiritual than otherwise, she uses the language of material possessions: in the process of telling her son what belongs to him (he has inherited his eyes from his father), she also tells him that *he* belongs to *her* ("all that's left to me of Jim").

One is reminded of the letter that Grace Crane wrote her seventeen-year-old son about her prospects after divorce: "After nineteen years of married life I am obliged to admit that it spells '*Failure*' for your father and me. For him it does not mean *all* because his business has been his profession, but for me it means all but you, for marriage has been my profession. Most of the time I am optomistic [*sic*] about my future because it lies with you I *hope,* but once in a while I must confess I loose [*sic*] hold of myself and let me tell you my dear boy that those hours are real agony" (Lewis, *Letters* 40).

Given the symmetry between "Ave Maria" and "Indiana," we are probably meant to see the mother's attempt to act as mediatrix of her son's birthright as an allusion to the Virgin Mary's role as the mediatrix between God the Father and His children (one of the Virgin's liturgical titles is "Mediatrix of All Grace"). It is in her capacity as intercessor that Columbus invokes the Virgin in "Ave Maria." There, the Virgin Mother mediates between man and a divine Father who is present but distant ("O Thou who sleepest on Thyself, apart / Like ocean athwart lanes of death and birth"), while in "Indiana" the pioneer mother acts as mediatrix of her son's birthright in the total absence of a father who died before his son was born. And this absence extends to the cosmic level as well. Where Columbus, looking at the starry heavens, could see God in nature ("round thy brows unhooded now / —The kindled Crown!"), the farmer and his wife, arriving in Eldorado with its "promised crown / Of claims to stake," seek "His gleaming name" in "golden syllables loosed from the clay" but discover instead "gilded promise, yielded to us never" (49). As the mother says, "We found God lavish there in Colorado / But passing sly" (49).

Section 12

1. In his edition of *The Bridge* (in *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*) Marc Simon corrects "Tiphysque" to "Tethysque" in the Senecan epigraph of "Ave Maria," and he explains in a footnote: "Below the epigraph in the first edition proofs 'look up Medea?' is inscribed and circled in pencil, but not in HC's hand. The form 'Tiphysque' became 'Tethysque' in the first edition, but HC had not changed or commented on the quotation, which he had taken from an inaccurate source" (Simon 234). The "first edition" to which Simon refers is the Black Sun edition published by Harry and Caresse Crosby's Black Sun Press in Paris in 1930, and Simon's correction of the epigraph to conform to the way it appears in that edition, while it reproduces what Seneca wrote, masks the "inaccurate source" from which Crane took the epigraph, namely, the biography of Columbus written by his son in which this specific quote from Seneca is linked to Columbus, a linking that raises the possibility that Columbus's son had substituted the name of the Argo's steersman Tiphys for that of Tethys to make the passage's application to the Great Navigator more appropriate. Crane may very well have been led to this quote from Seneca (and thus to its appearance in Fernando Colon's biography of his father) by Washington Irving's *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus,* in which Irving discusses in chapter five Fernando Colon's contention that his father had been influenced in his belief in "the existence of undiscovered lands in the west" (22) by reading ancient authors who convinced him "that the intervening space of ocean could be but moderate, and easy to be traversed. Among these he cites the opinions of Aristotle, Seneca, and Pliny" (23). But the most interesting aspect of Irving's book is that the exact quote from Seneca's *Medea* that Crane used

as the epigraph to "Ave Maria" appears on Irving's title page, containing the name "Tiphys" and lineated in the following manner:

> Venient annis
> Saecula seris, quibus Oceanus
> Vincula rerum laxet, et engens
> Pateat tellus, Tiphysque novos
> Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
> Ultima Thule.
> *Seneca Medea*

This is also how the passage is lineated in Fernando's biography of his father and in the 1928 typescript of "Ave Maria" that Crane sent to Otto Kahn, though the version of the epigraph in the 1929 typescript (which had the name as "Tiphysque") that Crane gave the Black Sun Press had the lineation corrected to match that in the Loeb Classical Library edition. (Both the 1928 and 1929 typescripts are in the Columbia University Library.) All of which suggests that Simon's "correction" of the epigraph, while it may have been right with regard to Seneca's text, was a mistake in regard to Crane's.

Section 16

1. *The Librettos of the Wagner Operas,* vol. 1 of *The Opera Libretto Library,* 1:140.

Section 17

1. The quester's vision of Poe in the subway car structurally parallels the vision of Helen on a streetcar in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," and this link between Poe and Helen is further strengthened by Crane's description of Poe's eyes as "agate lanterns," an allusion to Poe's poem "To Helen," in which the idealized woman is described as leaning from a "window-niche" with an "agate lamp" in her hand to guide the speaker home. It is this vision of the artist dedicated to the image of immortal beauty (personified by Helen) that allows the poetic quester to have his subsequent vision—in effect, to see the image of Goethe's selfless, golden-haired Helen (the mother who rejoins her dead son in the underworld) in the figure of the "Wop washerwoman" on the subway (Crane 70).

Yet there may be a further allusion contained in the image of Poe's eyes as "agate lanterns," an allusion that links Aeneas to these evocations of Helen. Crane was the type of poet who seldom used a word without knowing its etymology. Indeed, many of the more puzzling passages in Crane's work usually become clearer once one knows the origins of their key words, for Crane often uses words more for their original (sometimes arcane) meanings than for their current ordinary ones. Crane could have learned from any etymological dictionary that the word *agate* derives from the Latin proper name *Achates,* the name of a Sicilian river where, according to Pliny, the stone was first discovered. But the Latin name is also the same as that of a recurring character in the *Aeneid,* a similarity Mabbott notes in his edition of Poe's poems when he says of the phrase "agate lamp" that "the agate is named for 'fidus Achates,' the *faithful* friend of Aeneas in Vergil" (Poe, *Collected* 1:171, n.). The epithet "fidus Achates" is a proverbial phrase for an exceptionally loyal companion, precisely because in the *Aeneid,* Achates is singled out again and again as Aeneas's most trusted follower, the person to whose care he continually commits his son Ascanius whenever he (Aeneas) must embark on an adventure by himself, as with

his descent into the underworld. Indeed, so frequently does Achates fill this role in the *Aeneid* that he almost seems a surrogate father to Ascanius. And by as much as the encounter between Poe and the quester in "The Tunnel" structurally corresponds to that between Anchises and Aeneas in Book 6, in effect, evoking Poe as the quester's visionary surrogate father, it seems only appropriate that, in *The Bridge*'s ongoing chain of classical associations, the visionary Poe's eyes should be described with an adjective alluding to the figure who serves as the father substitute for Aeneas's son.

2. One might note in passing that in the first American edition of Crane's collected poems, prepared by his friend Waldo Frank and published by Liveright in 1933, the year after Crane's death, the third line of "Cutty Sark" reads "His eyes pressed through green grass" rather than "His eyes pressed through green glass," which is how the line appeared in the 1930 Black Sun edition of *The Bridge* published in Paris and in the 1930 American edition published by Liveright. Although the change seems like a typographical error, one can't help but wonder—given that it is Glaucus's eating of the green meadow grass that transforms him into a sea god, turning his body green—whether this substitution of "grass" for "glass" was something that Crane had told Frank he intended to make in any new edition of *The Bridge* and that Frank in fact made in his edition of Crane's collected poems. Such a change would fit in not only with the Glaucus imagery that underlies "Cutty Sark" but also with the Whitmanian grass imagery that is invoked in "Cape Hatteras," the section to which "Cutty Sark" leads. Suffice it to say, that in Brom Weber's subsequent edition of Crane's poems the reading of the third line of "Cutty Sark" remained "His eyes pressed through green grass," so that all versions of the poem published between 1933 and 1986 (when the Simon edition appeared) have the reading "grass" for "glass."

Section 18

1. The first reference to Stamboul in "Cutty Sark" is the phrase "Stamboul Nights," the presumed title of the song played by "the nickel-in-the-slot piano" in the speakeasy where the old sailor and the quester are drinking. Given that there is no song of that title in the musical *Rose of Stamboul,* or anywhere else that I've been able to discover, one wonders whether "Stamboul Nights" is an allusion to, or simply a memory of, *Stamboul Nights,* a book of short stories by H. G. Dwight. Harrison Griswold Dwight was born in Constantinople in 1875, and after graduating from Amherst College he entered the U.S. consular service. He wrote four volumes of short stories, as well as many magazine articles on art, gardening, and the Middle East; he served in the State Department in Washington, DC, during the same period that Crane's friend Wilbur Underwood was working there, and from 1935 to 1947 Dwight was assistant director of the Frick Collection in New York. He died in 1959 in Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts. If Crane's use of the phrase "Stamboul Nights" was indeed an allusion to Dwight's short story collection of that name, then it can only be because two of the stories involve subterranean journeys that could be thought of as foreshadowing "The Tunnel" and Aeneas's underworld descent layered beneath it.

All the stories in *Stamboul Nights* are set in Istanbul, and most of them are about the meeting of East and West. In the story "Mortmain," an American, Rev. Horatio Bisbee, buys a piece of land in Istanbul to build a Christian mission, the site having previously been that of "a Byzantine monastery, and before that of a pagan temple—to Aphrodite," a site where perhaps "priceless relics of antiquity

still remained to be discovered" (32–33). Bisbee is approached by two Armenians who tell him that if he digs down at a certain spot on this land he will find "an iron door" that opens onto steps leading to a passageway where he will recover ancient treasures. The description of Bisbee's descent would have had special resonance for Crane: "The solid, the comfortable earth opened under Bisbee's feet into labyrinths as dark and incredible as Avernus. For in the bottom of his patriotic heart he had always felt that the world really began in 1492. To descend, with two strangers of whom he knew nothing but their fantastic story, a stairway which must already have been buried thirty-nine years when Columbus discovered America, was to enter bodily that dim Saturnine age in whose existence he had never really believed" (50). Earlier in the story, someone has explained to Bisbee "the nature of the soil" in Istanbul "as being due not only to the natural effect of time but to the fact the city had so often been sacked—by the Persians in the fifth century before Christ, by Septimius Severus in the second century after, by the Venetians and the Franks of the fourth crusade and by the Turks in 1453" (32–33). This image of a series of ruined cities layered beneath modern Istanbul would, of course, be the figurative equivalent in terms of archeology for that "mythical method" of layering an ancient story beneath a modern one practiced by Joyce in *Ulysses* and Eliot in *The Waste Land,* a method that is one of the structural frameworks of *The Bridge.* And the image of the American Bisbee descending into an underground space as dark as "Avernus" (the place in which Aeneas descended to the underworld) where he "entered bodily" a pre-Columbian world ("that dim Saturnine age") would have been for Crane an appealing analogue of the quester's imaginative journey into the past, the Amerindian nature-world.

The other story in *Stamboul Nights* with a subterranean journey is titled "Under the Arch." The narrator visits a Turkish bath and the bathman, an Anatolian, suddenly launches into a tale, "In my country . . . there is a lake. And in the lake there is an island. And on the island there is a tree. And under the tree there is a hole. And down the hole stairs go, to a palace under the lake. And there a girl sits, a Christian girl with yellow hair, combing her hair with a golden comb" (225). And the bathman adds, "'It is as if we were under the lake in my country. See how little light comes through the water!' He pointed to the greeny bull's eyes in our little dome" (226). The images of "greeny bull's eyes" and of a world under water recall the old sailor's green eyes in "Cutty Sark" and Glaucus's underwater world in *Endymion,* but whether Crane's use of the phrase "Stamboul Nights" in "Cutty Sark" is intended to evoke for the reader these aspects of Dwight's two stories as an allusive background or whether these similarities simply suggested the phrase "Stamboul Nights" as an appropriate title for the pianola's song in "Cutty Sark" remains a matter of speculation.

Section 19

1. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 2:478. Subsequent quotations from this edition are cited as *Britannica.*

Section 21

1. Given that Crane considered the millennia-old star groupings and their names as one example of "the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present" and further that he was familiar with the *Scientific American*'s monthly star chart, then an article that appeared in the maga-

zine's April 1926 issue would have presented him with a further sense of the way the night sky retained the past's "living evidence" in the contemporary world. The article, entitled "The Super-Telescope: A Scientific Fantasy of the Past and the Future" and written by a Dr. M. Luckiesh (identified as the "Director, Lighting Research Laboratory, National Lamp Works of the General Electric Company"), begins, "Imagine a super-telescope which would not only penetrate for our eyes the remotest confines of the universe but would turn back the pages of history." Luckiesh argues that the construction of a super-telescope, employing "electrical magnification" now appears "possible and perhaps probable," and he points out that though the velocity of light is 186,000 miles per second, stellar distances are so enormous that in comparison "light travels relatively slowly." Since the sun's light striking the earth is rereflected out into the universe,

> if we searched the celestial bodies near the earth for a minute mirror—a facet of a crystal or a plane surface of molten material—we could see ourselves in that mirror if it were properly oriented (and if we waited long enough) . . . By choosing the proper mirror we could witness, by reflection, events which took place on earth 150 years ago . . . Rigel is 466 light-years away. If we could sit on that star with our electrical telescope, we would have to wait another 33 years before we could see Columbus with his tiny ships approaching the shores of this country for the first time.

Luckiesh ends his article by implicitly acknowledging the "scientific fantasy" element in his speculations, "All this appears possible, barring adverse atmospheric conditions" but adds, "At least these paragraphs give us a vivid picture of the finiteness of the velocity of light. They stimulate the imagination and help us to gain an idea of stellar distance and their relation to time in terms of earth-events" (237).

At the very least, Luckiesh's article reminds us of how prevalent in the 1920s was the sense of "American ingenuity" (with its resultant scientific innovations) as the practical expression of human progress and perfectibility in the New World, and this in turn reminds us how much a poem like *The Bridge* is a product of the 1920s, a poem that takes as its central symbolic object a marvel of nineteenth-century American scientific and engineering innovation and that celebrates twentieth-century American inventions such as the airplane, viewing both suspension bridge and airplane as expressions of the infinite possibilities inherent in Whitman's idea of the Open Road. Certainly, if Crane read Luckiesh's article, he would have recognized its scientific fantasy of looking out into the stars to see reflections of the earth's past history as being an analogue of his own evocation of the constellated stars as the eternally recurring presence of the past.

Section 22

1. One should note in passing a recurrent pun of Crane's on the word *spring,* in that he often treats the season's name as if it derived from an image of plants and vines springing from the earth like life-giving springs of water. Thus in "The Dance" when Crane describes Pocahontas as the Indian Corn Mother rising with the maize, he says not that she sprouted arms but that "she spouted arms." And in "Lachrymae Christi" from *White Buildings* he describes the grape plants in spring as "these / Perpetual fountains, vines" (14), the liquid they channel being the wine made from grapes and the vines' annual reemergence from beneath the earth being linked to the resurrections of both Dionysus and Jesus. We should also note here the Melvillean resonances of the words *spout* and *fountain* from *Moby-Dick.* Thus,

spout is used again and again to describe the jet of water and air issuing from the whale's spiracle, as, for example, in the title of chapter 51, "The Spirit-Spout" (the chapter from whose second paragraph Crane took the phrase "scrolls of silver" to describe the moonlit sea in the second stanza of "Voyages II"), while chapter 85, Melville's lengthy discussion of whether the sperm whale jets water, air, or a mixture of the two from its spiracle, is titled "The Fountain."

Section 23

1. If we are right about one of the meanings of those sustaining "tears" in "Atlantis"'s eighth stanza being rain, then that reading is confirmed in stanza 9's opening line when Crane addresses the bridge as "Forever Deity's glittering Pledge," which is say, when he images the arc of the bridge as the rainbow that, according to Genesis 9:11–16, God told Noah He had placed in the clouds after the Flood as "the token of the covenant" between Him and mankind that He would never destroy the world again by water. Of course, Crane uses the rainbow at several key moments in the poem as an image of a bridge between sky and earth. In "The Dance," for example, when Maquokeeta and Pocahontas enact the marriage of sky and earth, Crane imaginatively identifies himself with the former, saying, "I, too, was liege / To rainbows currying each pulsant bone" (47), and again in "Cape Hatteras" when Crane imagines Whitman as a sort of Pan-like natural deity rising from beneath the earth into the sky, he says, "And see! The rainbow's arch—how shimmeringly stands / Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer!" (60). As we noted earlier, the image of a rainbow bridge resonated for Crane in a variety of texts: from the rainbow bridge to Valhalla in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* to the many references to the rainbow bridge to the Overman in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and even to that passage in Poe's "A Descent into the Maelstrom" (1841) where the narrator sees above the gigantic whirlpool "a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which the Mussulmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity" (Poe, *Collected* 2:591).

Section 24

1. Given that Crane addresses the bridge as "River-*throated*" and given Crane's sexual orientation, we should not overlook the possibility that the form of sexual conjunction being evoked in the lines from "Atlantis" also involves fellatio, a sense reinforced by the imagery of passion and tongues in the concluding stanza of "The River."

2. Shelley, *Complete* 2:127. One might note in passing that Canto I of Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* contains many images resembling those that Crane deploys in "The Dance." Thus, for example, there is a thunderstorm that turns into a battle between an eagle and a serpent, a nameless woman, a comet, and the Morning Star, which the woman describes as being "like an eye that seemed to smile on me" (2:123). Though Shelley's poem may have served as one source for imagery in "The Dance," I do not believe Crane intended it to serve as an allusive background to that section of *The Bridge.*

Section 25

1. For a further discussion of the influence of Bryant's poetry on *The Bridge,* see Irwin, "Figurations of the Writer's Death" 217–60.

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